

KEEPING THE SEAS



THE AUTHOR.

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BY

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C.B., D.S.O., R.N.



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FOREWORD

NAVAL officers have not generally been encouraged to write popular accounts of their experiences and adventures, and I have steadfastly refused to be "drawn" up to date; but quite recently officers of high rank have published books and memoirs that have quite an apologetic strain about them. 'What on earth the British Navy has to apologise for, I have yet to discover, and why the achievements of a magnificent soldier like Kitchener should be pulled to pieces now, I cannot imagine. However, there it is, and in placing my volume on the market I make no apology whatever. I have stories to tell which will throw light on the work of the satellites, whose tiny vessels patrolled the seas for four and a half years, not even weary years, mark you, because we in the little craft were too enthusiastic over the Allied cause and, incidentally, too proud of our Naval services to let anybody down.

Enthusiasm and self-confidence make for success in war, and it is of the sea enthusiasts that I write. The book cannot please everybody, but it should please the majority, and its intention is to bring into the picture some of those whose names are unknown to the general public, but who, nevertheless, displayed a courage, ability and heroism almost unsurpassed in the history of the war.

Nor is the book written for those who believe too strongly in the proverb, "They also serve who stand and wait," it is rather for those whose motto is "Go in and win."

CHAPTER I

COMMENCING WITH DOVER AND THE SIXTH FLOTILLA

AT the commencement of hostilities against Germany, The Patrol Flotilla, attached to Dover Strait, consisted of twelve very fast destroyers classed as the Tribals, and in addition to these we had a dozen or so of small, obsolete torpedo-boat destroyers.

Although navally known as "thirty-knotters," these little vessels were virtually incapable of exceeding twenty-five knots at full speed. Some of them were built as far back as 1896, and in 1914 they were in various stages of decay. They had seen better days, these poor shabby little old-fashioned torpedo craft. Their captains and officers were proud of them nevertheless; their crews were happy and their sub-lieutenants, boys of twenty who were paid as their first and executive officers, spent hours in hiding the dented and patched disfigurements of age by a liberal use of black paint and a delicate addition of "pretty-pretties," such as polished brass wind-vanes on the mastheads and little badges fixed on the tiny dinghies which were carried by these craft. The big-handed sailor men were proud of their floating homes, and they willingly put up with the most dreadful accommodation in the dark, ill-ventilated hole, officially

named the mess-deck, for the greater freedom from big-ship discipline, and the considerable increase to their scanty pay.

At the end of July, 1914, I had the honour of commanding the *Mohawk*, one of the Tribals, and as the senior officer, I brought twelve fast destroyers to Dover, to join up with the thirty-knotters and, with them, to take over the patrol of Dover Strait and its approaches.

The officer who had charge of the Dover destroyers was Captain C. D. Johnson, R.N., of H.M.S. *Attentive*, and his naval title was Captain (D) Sixth Flotilla.

It may be explained that each destroyer flotilla has a captain in charge, and this officer is responsible for the discipline, organisation and conduct of the flotilla under his charge. The Captain (D) is in fact a miniature admiral, his flotilla a miniature fleet, and the officers commanding the destroyers in the flotilla are a certain number of commanders, each with his own division of four boats, while the remainder of the destroyer skippers are lieutenants or lieutenant-commanders. They are mostly very young men, frequently of independent opinion and generally full of initiative. A destroyer captain is a little tin god in his way, who should (and usually does) command the respect and affection of those in his little command.

Four light cruisers were attached to the Dover Patrol, under the orders of Captain Johnson; none of them very new, but whatever designs the Germans had on Dover or the adjacent coasts of France, it is safe to say that the officers and men of the Sixth Flotilla and the attached cruisers were eager and anxious to go in against the enemy and win.

I well remember the howl of joy that went up from the destroyers when the yeoman of each little vessel strode firmly aft, with grim smile, and handed to his commanding officer the signal—"Commence hostilities against Germany."

During the critical period that preceded the fatal day, we destroyer captains were called on board, *en masse*, to hear our leaders' plans, and to gather what our duties would be. The plans were clear enough. The patrols were all decided and arranged for us, and shortly after the receipt of that signal, never to be forgotten, the black hulls of a score of destroyers were to be seen gliding out of the entrances of Dover harbour.

It was, of course, summer time, and the weather fine, clear and warm.

In the opinion of the majority, we had little chance of submarine encounters; the enemy had not so many U boats to spare in 1914, and I think we expected the Hun to aim for something better, and to play for higher stakes than the somewhat faded vessels of the obsolete Sixth Flotilla. I may say here that I am not included in the ranks of the "Lets-all-be-gloomy Brigade," and whatever other people may say, I think the Admiralty of 1914 deserve a pat on the back for their selection of the vessels in the Sixth Flotilla, when our war plans were worked out.

To start with, the Germans did not know everything. They did not know what submarines were ready to rip open the steel hulls of their attacking ships that might come our way by day. By night they would gain nothing by sending good ships through, which was practically asking for a destroyer attack under conditions most favourable to the destroyer.

Before the Belgian coast ports were occupied, an enemy destroyer attack on Dover Straits was improbable during daylight hours, when the Harwich Force could, and would, have cut off their retreat. So what we really had to face was not very much until the days grew shorter and the hours of darkness lent themselves to more advantageous attacking conditions. Even then, as the year 1914 drew to a close, it was none too likely that we should get a night destroyer raid, for the enemy had no very great inducement in sending modern destroyers to fight ships which, even if inferior in armament, were not inferior in speed, and not likely to be manned by gentlemen with cold feet. As we have seen in this war, night destroyer fights are not decided by numbers and armaments, so much as by luck and dash.

The Tribal class burnt oil fuel, their speeds in 1914 were very high, and their sea-keeping qualities magnificent, as far as weather was concerned. Their disadvantages were in armament, especially in torpedoes, and in their high fuel consumption, which limited their radius of action compared to the destroyers of the now celebrated "L" class, and those of post-war pattern.

The following is a list of the Tribals, for those who care for a more detailed explanation:—

Name.		Original Speed.	Armament	Date of Launch.
<i>Afridi</i>	.. ..	32.75 knots	5 12-pounders and	1907
<i>Cossack</i>	.. ..	33.15 "	2 torpedo tubes	1907
<i>Ghurka</i>	.. ..	34 "	"	1907
<i>Mohawk</i>	.. ..	34.51 "	"	1907
<i>Tartar</i>	.. ..	35.67 "	"	1907
<i>Saracen</i>	.. ..	33.8 "	2 4-inch and	1908
<i>Amazon</i>	.. ..	33.73 "	2 torpedo tubes	1908
<i>Crusader</i>	.. ..	35 "	"	1909
<i>Maori</i>	.. ..	33 "	"	1909
<i>Nubian</i>	.. ..	34.88 "	"	1909
<i>Viking</i>	.. ..	34.88 "	"	1909
<i>Zulu</i>	.. ..	34 "	"	1909

And now let us turn to the thirty-knotters. It will be noticed they were decidedly old-fashioned:—

Name.	Original Speed.	Armament.	Date of Launch.
<i>Crane</i>	30.3 knots	1 12-pounder 5 6-pounders 2 torpedo tubes	1896
<i>Fawn</i>	30.5 "		1897
<i>Flirt</i>	30 "		1897
<i>Gipsy</i>	30 "		1897
<i>Lewen</i>	30 "		1898
<i>Mermaid</i>	30 "		1898
<i>Falcon</i>	30 "		1899
<i>Greyhound</i>	30 "		1900
<i>Kangaroo</i>	30 "		1900
<i>Myrmidon</i>	30 "		1900
<i>Racehorse</i>	30 "		1900
<i>Syren</i>	30 "		1900

The Sixth Flotilla maintained their patrol nearly across the Straits. French destroyers and small torpedo-boats kept watch on their own side. For some few months our Allies laboured with us at the somewhat uninteresting work of intercepting all vessels attempting to pass the Straits of Dover and diverting them through the Downs to be examined by men who knew; these men were a collection of officers with merchant service experience, who pretty shrewdly sized up fool and rogue, and who made it their business to separate the sheep from the goats. This intercepting work kept one constantly on the bridge; by night we had great trouble with vessels who tried hard to evade the examination service and some of them were very clever; perhaps some of them got through! Very early in the war the *Zulu* seized and took to Dover as a prize, a beautiful German sailing vessel. Her captain spoke English well, and knew nothing whatever of the war. He cheerily invited the *Zulu's* skipper on board and asked him down to drink "A long glass be-e-er." Poor man! He burst into tears when the news was broken that the *Zulu* had

captured him—at least he has the distinction now of being one of the few living Germans who escaped some of the horrors of war.

By day our patrol duties were lighter; we got three days in harbour out of four, and three nights at sea out of four. It was not necessary to patrol so closely during the day time, for one could hold the Straits with five destroyers, whereas at night we thickened up the patrol line to stop anything passing through.

My own experience was that Dutch and Swedish vessels ignored our signals and the Admiralty's instructions most; but what we couldn't always get into them by politeness we sometimes succeeded in doing by means of a blank charge, or a shot across their bows. Some, I fear, even descended to familiarities through the megaphone, such as "Van Tromp, old dear, you'll never see Rotterdam, Schiedam or Amsterdam again unless you take your *dam* ship through the Downs."

I caught up one large Dutch liner, the *Tubantia*, and made her anchor off Folkestone. She had some Germans on board, but we received orders at that time not to arrest Germans travelling on neutral ships. Later on in the war the Germans torpedoed and sank her themselves.

On another occasion, shortly after Austria was declared our enemy, I caught an Austrian steamer, a splendid vessel, passing to the East of the Goodwins by the forbidden route. She stopped as directed and an officer boarded her, alas! to find that she had a "Days of Grace" permit allowing her to proceed unmolested to Austria. I was disappointed for she would have been a splendid prize.

The patrolling was a pleasure to begin with, albeit a

somewhat strenuous pleasure, but we began to grow envious and restless when the news of the prowess of the "L" boats reached us. Four "L" boats were with the light cruiser *Amphion* when the German minelayer *Königin Luise* was sunk, on the 5th August, 1914, and these same boats rescued the crew of the *Amphion* the following day, when she struck one of the mines laid by her victim and was sunk herself in consequence.

It was on August 28th, less than a month after war was declared, that the "L" boats got their chance off Heligoland. The account of this now famous fight made us yearn for close action and, to my knowledge, certain of the destroyer captains applied for transfer to the destroyer forces working under the Commodore (T) at Harwich. The *Zulu's* captain became flag-lieutenant to Commodore Tyrwhitt of the Harwich striking force; but some of those who left Dover eventually regretted it.

However, the patrolling soon changed for the better. The Royal Naval Division, was sent to Antwerp, and it fell to the Sixth Flotilla destroyers to escort the huge transports that conveyed the troops to Ostend and Zeebrugge. Stealthily we moved away from Dover under cover of darkness; the large liners were never subjected to the risk of submarine attack between Dover and the ports of disembarkation. The transfer of the Naval Division was made in the early autumn nights when no moonlight could give away their movements. In the grey dawn, the steamers were berthed at Zeebrugge or Ostend and we, in our destroyers, watched them glide into these harbours, and hungrily gazed after those who crowded the vessels, wishing to be with them, wondering when they would meet the foe and hoping they would bring honour to the White Ensign. Perhaps

I was more envious than others for my friend, Commander Victor Campbell, was adjutant of the Drake Battalion, and I knew he would make good. Campbell had been first lieutenant of Captain Scott's famous exploring ship *Terra Nova*, when I had the honour of commanding her, but of Victor Campbell more anon.

CHAPTER II

THE BELGIAN COAST IN 1914

IN late September, not so very long after the Heligoland Battle, Rear-Admiral, The Hon. Horace Hood, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., was appointed to command the Dover Patrol, and with his fighting instincts he could not keep his motley squadron away from the Belgian coast. It fell to Admiral Hood to arrange the preliminary work of the coastal bombardments. Flying his flag in the destroyer *Amazon* (Commander Harry Oliphant), Hood led the destroyers close into Ostend Roads, shelled the right wing of the advancing German Army, and, one bright Sunday morning, to the surprise and annoyance of my fellow explorer, Sven Hedin, the destroyers, with incredible audacity, came close to the shore and one of their shells blew away the *déjeûner* and killed the guest of the aforesaid Swedish gentleman.

Dr. Sven Hedin (who is an Honorary Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order), was one of those delightful neutrals who "backed the wrong horse." He not only sympathised with Germany, but actively assisted the Hun by his journalistic efforts and general propaganda work. At the present moment, 10th April, 1919, I am sitting in the Hotel de Londres at Ostend, and, as I glance out of the window, I see everywhere signs of the "Gentle German," which Sven Hedin so inaccurately describes. All the ironwork of the balconies

has been broken off, lamp-posts are torn away, cranes have been wrecked, dredgers sunk and so forth. In the houses, chandeliers have been pulled down and stolen, marble staircases wrecked, houses mutilated, drains cut, water supplies ruined and the "mark of the beast" is everywhere. I find that Sir Sven Hedin (K.C.V.O.) does not contrast favourably with the clear blue-eyed Norseman, Amundsen, that intrepid explorer who showed his contempt for the "Gentle German" by handing back all his Hun decorations as a protest against the thousands of murders of neutral seamen by those sailing under the German Naval Ensign.

I think I am correct in quoting a highly-placed Norwegian official, who informed me that not one Norwegian life was lost through the action of the Allied Navies.

The Belgian coast bombardments commenced seriously in October, 1914, when Admiral Hood shelled the enemy in accordance with the wishes of the Belgian and British Headquarters Staff. The vessels we had to begin with cut a sorry figure when compared to the monitors of 1918. The bombarding flotilla consisted of the antiquated gunboats which had been used for training seamen in peace time by the Gunnery Schools at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Sheerness. We had some capital little monitors of 1,260 tons displacement and about twelve knots speed, which mounted then a pair of 6-inch guns in a turret forward, and a 4.7 gun aft.

These vessels, the *Humber*, *Mersey* and *Severn*, were built by Armstrong's, to the order of a foreign Government, but never delivered. They did excellent work, and their shallow draught, which required only a fathom of water to manœuvre in, rendered them eminently suitable for the operations in progress. In



(Photographed by Speaight, Ltd.)

KING ALBERT,

The Hero Monarch, on the Battlefield of Flanders During the War.

1914, well-organised as the German Army undoubtedly was, the enemy shore artillery made a sorry display against a moving target, although the speed of the bombarding vessels was "nothing to write home about."

The most absurd feature of these early sea bombardments was the introduction of the two "Flat Iron" gunboats, *Excellent* and *Bustard*. They were *the absolute limit!* Phew! . . . Smaller than the Thames penny steamboats, slower than the Philadelphia snails, they literally crawled about like tortoises; getting into position, firing, one of them a 9.2-inch gun and the other a 6-inch breech loader, drifting off their marks in the tide-way and then laboriously groping back and "loosing off" once more. It was extremely comic! but we had nothing else to spare.

Forgive me if I depart from the spirit of the critics; everybody slangs Winston, but he sent us these ships, which were exquisitely described as of no *naval* value. They were unfit for ordinary sea fighting, but I laughed into my early morning tea and spluttered crumbs from the bread and butter with which I fortified my empty stomach, whilst I watched these quaint sea practices. It was good to be alive. The Germans fired a lot of stuff back at us, but did very little damage. A shell makes a pretty splash in the sea, and these coastal operations—for most of us our baptism of fire—did us a lot of good.

During the time that Admiral Hood directed operations from the *Amazon*, a signalman had been stationed at the end of Nieuport Pier for the purpose of passing signals from the Army to the Admiral, and *vice versa*. The flag lieutenant who accompanied the Admiral was Bill Adams or, to give him his navy list title, Lieutenant Jamieson B. Adams, R.N.R. Adams was an old Ant-

arctic explorer, having been second in command to Sir Ernest Shackleton on the famous expedition of 1907, when he accompanied his leader to a point within 100 miles of the South Pole itself. He had a charming and humourous personality, was a regular handy man and, as the Norsemen say, "had an eye on every finger."

The destroyers were being fired at fairly heavily, and Adams was much put to it with his small signal staff to keep things going. However, he managed to keep an eye on the connecting link, who was continually flashing out signals from the pier head, and when Adams observed that the pier head was coming into the zone of the enemy shell fire, he told the *Amazon* signal staff to order the man off the pier. In vain they signalled to this effect, the signalman stuck to his pier-head, flashing to seaward, semaphoring to shoreward, oblivious of the dangers which were besetting him, but jumping round like a monkey in a red hot cage. Adams through his telescope saw that whole sections of the pier were being shot away, and to emphasize the necessity of making the signalman withdraw, he shouted in a voice that could be heard above the boom and crash of the guns, "Tell that blooming CASABIANCA to go to Hell out of it *NOIV*."

Reverting to the *Excellent* (Commander Saurin) and *Bustard* (Lieut. McGuire), whatever damage they did I never heard, but one couldn't help admiring them for their untiring efforts and their plucky obstinacy. They took hours to get into position and, once within range of the enemy's guns, they stopped there until their ammunition was gone or the day was spent, and then plugged stolidly away homeward to their anchorage for

another load of shell. Their crews would work all night to avoid missing any fun and, in the early morning, these two toy ships would be the first to weigh, by hours; but in spite of their five knots maximum speed, they were never adrift from their places when bombardments again commenced.

We in the destroyers patrolled the Belgian coast at night and, closing into the shore, had a splendid view of the burning houses and bursting projectiles as the two opposing armies made battle in the night. It was all unutterably weird and sad to watch the devastation of the Flanders seaside health resorts.

Personally I shall never forget the red flashes of the exploding shells and the uncanny flames that burnt in the houses and showed through the shattered windows of the Belgian Villas at Westende, Middelkerke and other villages. Ostend did not suffer much, the Germans had advanced too quickly and the Allies never shelled or bombed this town intentionally, although it was always full of Germans once they had taken possession.

It was, for most of us, the first real war we had faced, although a fair number of officers and men had taken part in the small African wars. Admiral Hood, in particular had had his share in the Soudan and Somaliland.

During the latter part of October, the Germans brought up some 8-inch naval guns, which made things very unpleasant for us. On October 28th, 1914, Hubert Wauton was killed. He was the first Sixth Flotilla destroyer captain to lose his life in the war. His ship was struck by an 8-inch shell, which accounted for twenty-four of his sixty men.

Wauton's destroyer was the *Falcon*, an obsolete ship of 375 tons. She was taken out of action by the sub-

lieutenant, Du Boulay, her second in command. She fired back with her puny armament of one 12-pounder and five 6-pounder guns, until the shots no longer reached the shore. The *Falcon* was at the time patrolling the N.E. channel off Ostend, close to the Stroom Bank.

Commander Williams, in the *Syren*, stood over to assist the *Falcon* and we, in the *Mohawk*, made over in her direction at full speed, but suddenly the *Syren* ran ashore on one of the shallow banks. It was useless to stand on after her with our greater draught. With a sigh of relief I saw the *Falcon* get clear of the shells that were falling into the sea west of the Stroom Bank, the *Syren* throw up a great wave with her propellers working in shallow water and she came off the bank unhurt by the enemy, though her propellers were badly bent.

The general routine of the bombarding flotilla was to get into position at dawn and carry out the "plastering" of the positions indicated as thoroughly as possible. When the sun set and the light faded, the bombarding flotilla withdrew to Dunkirk Roads, while some of the ever watchful destroyers cruised to the eastward during the dark hours to protect the gunboats and monitors from a surprise attack.

Admiral Hood used to meet at the "Chapeau Rouge" Hotel the captains and gunnery officers of the ill-assorted squadron to discuss with the military Headquarters Staff the results of the day's shooting and arrange the plan for the morrow. I may say that I think we all enjoyed this business immensely. The youthful, quick-brained Admiral, with his cheery smile and perfectly delightful manner, won our hearts completely.

We had it very much our own way to begin with, and then the greatest danger to the firing ships was that

of running ashore, for they were very close in. But as time progressed and the Germans advanced, our little force was out-ranged and out-matched. The enemy were practically in Nieuport by November, and there is no doubt they intended to keep the coast. Heavy guns were brought up and mounted and the work of construction was taken in hand with German military thoroughness. Admiral Hood added the old *Revenge* to his off-shore squadron. She had four 13.5-inch 67-ton guns and ten old pattern 6-inch. It was very hard to find out what effective damage we did, for spotting arrangements were not so elaborate and accurate then as they became in the latter half of the war. The *Revenge* "got it in the neck" once or twice, but she couldn't have been sunk easily for there is no great depth of water in the West Deep, from which channel she was operated. Captain Hughes-Onslow, R.N., commanded the *Revenge*, and he rode the old iron war-horse into action like a Paladin.

This vessel has had her name changed to the *Redoubtable*, to make way for the new *Revenge* with her armament of eight 15-inch guns.

The *Venerable* (Captain V. H. G. Bernard), a rather less obsolete battleship, was also employed for some time bombarding on this coast. I had the honour of sounding out and marking a channel for her work through the Zuidcoote pass into the West Deep. The *Venerable*, I believe, escaped any punishment, although she fired many 12-inch shells at the Huns from Nieuport Roads.

The *Mohawk* was attached to the *Venerable* for a while, and it was a sad day for us when she was withdrawn and we were sent back to take up our proper work of monotonous patrol.

It was late in 1914 that Dunkirk became a semi-English naval base. Various wings of the Royal Naval Air Service settled their headquarters in the vicinity of this fort. It was here that I met Commander Sampson, although I made my bow to this distinguished flying man under somewhat undignified circumstances. To be honest, I had been up for a joy ride, and as we landed at the Camp of No. IV. Wing we came rather heavily to earth and broke a strut or two. My hat was knocked off and I blushed at meeting the Boss, for I had no excuse for joy riding.

However, he said nothing about that and when my friend and pilot apologised for bringing me down such a smack, I smiled, and innocently said, "Isn't that the ordinary way of landing?" The flying men looked at me rather suspiciously and then took me into their hut and gave me a capital lunch.

War had come upon us so suddenly that the Air Force organisation was by no means perfect. The airmen would fight and bomb with refreshing zeal, but were not then such advanced and scientific observers as they later on became. But it was at Dunkirk that we Dover birds really got together with the R.N.A.S. and learned to know them and to appreciate what enormous possibilities there were in flying, and in flying men's assistance in various naval work. They were never idle, these men; if the weather was unfit for flying and there was nothing they could invent better than to annoy the enemy, One, who shall be nameless, would finish his glass of port and say, "Come on, you fellows, let's go and shoot Uhlans," and away would roll the great drab coloured motor-car. It went everywhere, and seldom returned without a

German helmet or two, which had scarcely cooled off the warmth derived from the late lamented owner.

Many Belgian refugees flocked into Dunkirk and were taken on board the steamers sent there to transport them to our own shores. The procession of this sort was a sad one, and it left an impression on one's memory not easy to efface. The wistful looking children, the bent old men, the indignant womenfolk of all ages; each one bearing some part of the family property—as much as could be carried away; the rickety carts overloaded with "household goods" from cottage, shop and villa; wheelbarrows, handcarts, perambulators and trucks; anything in fact that could be utilised — all stacked with goods, pathetically overladen.

Sailors are funny characters, but for real spontaneous generosity, give me the "British Blue." It happened like an explosion; one evening, a pitiful, hungry line of dejected human beings came past the *Mohawk*; someone handed a cake to a little wild-eyed child; you might have put a match to a train of gunpowder — the "Mohawks" dashed on to the messdeck and in a matter of seconds we hadn't a vestige of eatable food on board — stokers with jumpots, men with sardines, stewards with oranges, apples and biscuits—I watched, for I had nothing to give. Our youthful steward had cleared the wardroom.

I often think of those Belgian refugees, of their soft-eyed, grateful looks, and as often of the tough crowd I commanded in the *Mohawk*. Perhaps the toughness was only skin-deep after all.

CHAPTER III

THE WINTER OF 1914-1915

IN the winter of 1914-15, the submarine campaign began, and the destroyers of the Sixth Flotilla were hard put to it. To my mind, this first winter took more out of the destroyer crews than anything we subsequently faced. The light cruisers had patrolled as a support for the destroyers to fall back upon if overwhelmed, but on the morning of October 31st, 1914, the aircraft carrier *Hermes* (formerly a second-class cruiser) was sunk by an enemy submarine near the outer Ruytingen Shoal, and orders came down from the Admiralty that no vessel except a destroyer, or a scout at full speed was to cross the channel during daylight hours. The fat was in the fire, the patrolling cruisers were withdrawn, and the destroyers had to be organised to patrol the areas which had been formerly watched over by the four light cruisers or scouts of the *Attentive* class; it meant more patrolling than ever.

This was not the first visit of the U boat, for one late September afternoon, the Captain (D) in the *Attentive* himself had sighted a submarine with her periscope just showing; in a flash the engines had been put to full speed and the helm starboarded, but the submarine had just had time to dive before being rammed. She had fired a torpedo first, however, and this ran along

the port side of the *Attentive*, missing her by inches. Had it not been for Captain Johnson's action we should have undoubtedly lost the *Attentive*, as the torpedo ran beautifully for striking her amidships at the original course and speed.

Everybody began to see submarines after this; the fins of black fish and rorquals were frequently taken for periscopes, and reported as such. Flotsam, and all sorts of wreckage, with anything vertical sticking out of it that might be mistaken for the offensive periscope was classified as such, and the poor destroyers hardly went a dog-watch without receiving the oft-recurring signal, "Submarine sighted in position —, proceed at full speed and search area."

Whouf! It made us tired. The signal was no sooner shown than the destroyers at Dover, resting or oiling, would slip from their moorings and shoot out of harbour, with ever increasing speed, and race to the area indicated. The senior officer of the bunch would organise the search and the Dover surf deer would plunge their bows into winter seas, take sheets of cold green water on board and shake themselves free, ten times in the minute.

This was long before the days of the depth charge; we had nothing to sink the wily submarine with but the gun, torpedo and ram. Some of us improvised explosive charges of gun-cotton which, thrown overboard, were fired by means of Bickford's fuse, or by electric circuit attached to a wire which was strong enough to tow the charge along.

In December I was transferred to the *Viking*, and I was delighted with the change, for although the *Mohawk*, was a good little ship, she had only 12-pounder guns, while the *Viking* was armed with 4-inch, and was bigger

by two hundred tons. The *Viking* had one peculiarity which distinguished her from all other destroyers — she had six funnels.

Before we finally say good-bye to the *Mohawk*, just pause a minute while I tell you the strange story of the *Göben* and the *Breslau*. I was unfortunate enough to damage the *Mohawk* through what, in the destroyer service, is known as “an error in judgment”; in other words the damage was not serious enough and the circumstances not black enough to merit any severe censure being passed upon me. Nevertheless, I had to be docked at Portsmouth for the damage to be made good. I hated being out of it, and so did my first lieutenant — accordingly we made an occasion to visit Dover.

It happened that Captain (D) wished for two large harbour launches to be sent to Dover for the purpose of attending on the destroyers. The *Racehorse* had attempted to tow one round, but that steam launch sank in the process. There was no transport available, so Allen, my first lieutenant, took one boat and I the other. In beautiful autumn weather, we started one morning for Dover. The funny old steamboats only went six knots and late in the afternoon of the first day we arrived off Newhaven. Being wet through, stiff and weary, we proposed to enter harbour and spend the night there, as there was no great hurry for us. We approached the harbour entrance and were hailed and stopped by the examination steamer. An officious gentleman came on board and, ignoring my explanations, proceeded to search both boats.

A marine signalman on board the examination steamer watched this assiduous visitor properly and thoroughly

examine us. The marine was mildly amused, then bored, and finally he spat with contempt over the side and respectfully suggested to the examination officer that we were "'Orl right." But the gentleman persisted and I remonstrated in vain. It was obvious that they didn't often examine "ships" bound for Newhaven. Our small steamboats were only 42 feet long and this conscientious somebody had kept us stopped for half-an-hour. Suddenly a dirty, black face popped up from the engine-room of Allen's boat and exclaimed: "'Ere, mister, the gime's up." The visitor superciliously asked what he meant. "The gime's up, mister, we may as well own up, this 'ere's the *Göben* and that's the *Breslau*." The faces looking down from the examination steamer broadened into a chain of smiles and we were then grudgingly given permission to enter harbour.

We spent a comfortable night with the naval transport officers, and assured them of the efficiency of their examination service. When we told them the story of the *Göben* and *Breslau*, one of them sent out for the stoker who had "given us away" and very kindly presented him with a bottle of beer. I think the stoker deserved it.

The submarine hunts were most unsatisfactory in these days, for all the advantages were with the enemy. The ruthles submarine warfare had not yet begun in earnest, but submarines were freely using the English Channel and it is quite honest to say that we couldn't prevent them from doing so. Our mines were not so deadly as the German types; we had not sufficient, nor had we, at this early state of the war, a mine-laying organisation capable of blocking the channel.

So the Dover Destroyer Force performed the inces-

sant and arduous duties of patrolling and submarine hunting, in addition to doing the requisite escort work for the cross-channel steamers, which carried large numbers of our soldiers to Calais or Boulougne.

The spirits of the destroyer crews were not easily damped. The war had not begun to drag and we were fresh, zealous and cheerful. Nobody could have studied our comfort better than our Captain (D) ; he considered us in every way and he got the very best out of us; he certainly had the goodwill of the business. As the war progressed we found that there was a limit to destroyer endurance. The destroyers themselves needed a rest, as well as their crews.

Accordingly a system of "stand-off" was inaugurated and after about 11 days' running, each boat was granted a three days' stand-off, if it could possibly be managed. How we did appreciate these rests! We were allowed ashore, although we could not leave the precincts of the port.

Little tinkering jobs were undertaken in the engine-rooms. A certain number of boilers were cleaned and small repairs were carried out by the Sixth Flotilla repair staff. This patch-up and sticking-plaster brigade worked under Engineer-Commander Parsons and Lieutenant-Commander Lewin, and I must pay them the compliment of saying that from top to bottom they were out to help. Day after day, night after night, they plodded away to make us a sea-keeping flotilla.

It will be realised by all who have seen Dover Harbour in winter, even if only from the shore, that it is a harbour merely in name. Oiling and coaling in bad weather were extremely difficult businesses. The tidal streams were so variable and strong that even when

the winds blew with gale force, the oilers and colliers would at times lie right athwart the wind and the poor destroyers would bump their light steel sides against the heavier iron-plating of the oil steamer or coal supply ship, as the case might be.

Fenders were useless, for those of the heaviest pattern would be chafed into pulp and the chains which supported them snapped in no time. The hand-rails of the torpedo craft were in a constant state of "brokenness," side-plating was dented in a most unsightly fashion, and the sentiments which found expression concerning those who were responsible for the selection and construction of Dover Harbour are quite impossible to write down in respectable English.

Dover as a destroyer base was an unfortunate choice for those who had to suffer it as such. My friend, the author of "Nubian Nonsense," appreciated the protection of Dunkirk Harbour, contrasted with Dover, when he penned the following lines:—

"THERE IS A HAPPY LAND."

There is a lovely place,
 Called Dover Bay,
Where it snows and rains and blows
 Almost every day.
Oh! it's bliss without alloy,
Oh! it is our greatest joy,
To roll our guts out at the buoy
 In Dover Bay.

There is another place
 Known as Dunkirk,
Where destroyers always go,
 When tired of work.
There they never do patrol,
Never burn their oil or coal,
Don't know what it is to roll,
 Safe in Dunkirk.

A division of Dover destroyers was usually kept at Dunkirk to act in conjunction with the French as a cutting-off force, in case of a German destroyer raid in the Channel, or Downs. Lucky were the T.B.D.'s selected for this service. The Dunkirk destroyers had their duties, such as an occasional coast reconnaissance, a daily trip with mails, etc., but during those long, dark nights, with howling gales, their crews turned in, snugly secure from the perils of the Straits and the dreadful discomforts of Dover Harbour (excuse a snigger at the latter word).

The first war-time Christmas arrived about the time when we had learned to know the Hun, not only as a great military organiser, but as a low-down, lying sneak.

We expected the Germans would make some great naval effort on Christmas Day, and, although it was my turn to stand-off, the boats of my division volunteered to patrol, for we were all unmarried captains and it was not much to give up a day ashore in Dover, at this time of the year. However, good as were our intentions, we had no say in the matter and so spent our Christmas Day in harbour and made merry at the Burlington Hotel that night, while our less fortunate comrades shivered on their frail bridges and drew what comfort they could from an occasional glimpse of the South Goodwin light and the slow, jerky illuminations of the Dover and Calais searchlights.

But it was a relief to the *Viking's* division to have a quiet Christmas day in harbour. The weather was fine, the sun shone, and my splendid ship's company of seventy good men and true mustered aft at 10 a.m., and listened to my amateur efforts as the vicar of

our eleven - hundred - and - forty - three - tons - displacement parish.

The very short divine service included that one prayer so well known to us all in the naval service. I read it through for it had its place even in the narrow, crowded quarterdecks of the little destroyers from Dover, and it has been included in the prayer-book with modifications to suit the existing monarch, since 1662, or thereabouts.

After service, we mustered our sailors, stokers, and signalmen by open list, that is to say, the coxswain called each man's name and, hat in hand, he stepped forward to receive the small but welcome present from Princess Mary's Christmas Fund. Then we lined the side and cheered as the *Amazon* and her division left for a Christmas patrol. It did me good to see the *Amazon*; she was the prettiest of the class, as she should be—the only lady in the Tribals, and it did one good to see Oliphant handle his ship.

When we had finished gazing at the unlucky ones, we turned to home comforts in the shape of Christmas cheer. The officers visited the mess deck, which was adorned in a way that left no doubts in the mind as to the state of the ship's company's spirits. The decorations were wonderful and the food and sweets available left nothing to be desired. Gibbs, my predecessor, had sent a turkey for every mess, and unknown benefactors had showered boxes and tins of good things upon the ship's company of the *Viking*. It was just about this time, in fact, that a Mr. Bertie Young appeared upon the scene and adopted all my sailors.

I had never heard of him, much less met him, but he developed all the faculties of the fairy godmother, and

be it Christmas, or Easter, autumn or summer, Bertie Young's neat hand-writing would surely appear, conveying the information that such and such a parcel "containing 10,000 cigarettes, 70 pipes, 25 lbs. of chocolate, etc., etc., has this day been despatched to you, care of the Naval Mail Officer, Dover." Bertie Young was a good friend to the *Viking*, and his friendship has extended to every ship I have ever commanded, as well as to many I have not.

The Germans did not worry us with their submarines this Christmas, and I, for one, spent the afternoon in a blissful, careless sleep.

A destroyer was not given to every one who volunteered for the command, and one well-known officer, Lieutenant-Commander Harry Rawson, was detailed for coaling duty at Dover, which duty he would have gladly exchanged with any of the Sixth Flotilla skippers. Rawson was one of the cheeriest people imaginable and he gave a Christmas dinner to the toilers of the Straits. We quite forgot the war until the end of dinner, when we drank to absent friends, and we did not forget our flotilla pals at sea.

It was, I think, about this time that the Modified Sweep was fitted to the larger destroyers of the Dover Patrol. This was the first of the anti-submarine devices with which we were fitted officially. Being the first, it was probably the worst, for we had some very clever brains at work in the anti-submarine division at the Admiralty; and the gentlemen in that department, once they got going, never retrograded. Roughly speaking, the modified sweep consisted of a double line of high-explosive charges, towed at two different depths. The charges were made buoyant by means of wooden floats

attached to them, and the whole concern was adjusted to keep a certain depth by means of a wooden kite.

On commencing a submarine hunt, the modified sweep was put over and towed about in the vicinity. The sweep was able to reach anything from the surface down to a depth of ten fathoms if it was properly worked, and it could be electrically fired at will. A man was always stationed at the firing key, and if anything caught in the sweep, the fact was indicated by the pulling over of a lever; when this happened, the operator pressed the key and blew up the submarine, or whatever the obstruction happened to be.

When the *Viking* had obtained her modified sweep and had it properly fitted, I got a lot of submarine fellows from H.M.S. *Arrogant* to come and have a look at it. Having made myself acquainted with all the details of the deadly device, and the proper method of employing it, I proudly explained its working and capabilities.

The submarine captains thought a bit, and then one of them dashed all my hopes to the ground by saying, "Well, any German submarine who gets caught in a fool device like that, bally well deserves to be sunk," and the others burst out laughing. So much for the modified sweep, but we really did get a submarine once by means of this much maligned appliance; it happened this way:

On the 1st of March, 1915, after a series of gales and storms, we suddenly were blessed with a spell of moderate weather. There was no wind at all, and nothing but a heavy swell reminded us of what we had put up

with. On March 4th, we had foggy weather, and the visibility was so indifferent that when I took the *Viking* out on patrol, it was impossible to make out where sea and sky met. The damp mist rolled up Channel and one's eyes were strained with the constant searching in this very uncertain light.

The young eyes of my sub-lieutenant, Frank Younghusband, suddenly made out the grey form of a submarine about half-a-mile away; he pointed it out and we went full speed at her, firing our foremost 4-inch gun and eagerly hoping to ram. But the increase from 15 to 33 knots takes a little time and the submarine, with a few seconds to spare, managed to dive before we could strike her. Our shots fell very close, but we did not secure a hit; I couldn't understand how the gun-layer missed, but I hadn't then tried shooting from a destroyer which is heading into a swell at high speed. We steamed round the place where the submarine was last seen, and rapped out signals which called all the Dover destroyers to our position, to the north-eastward of the Varne Shoal. In the meantime, "Fritz" had a shot with a torpedo at us. It was reported to me by Younghusband, but it ran badly and did not come very close.

We got out our comic old modified sweep, and as each destroyer came close to us, she was given an area to hunt. The Captain (D) came out from Dover in the *Maori* and took over command of the search. It continued for a few hours and we were fortunate enough to sight the U boat's periscope from time to time, as the fog lifted and the visibility became quite good. Suddenly the *Ghurka's* sweep caught in an obstruction and



H.M.S. "BROKE" MAKING A SMOKE SCREEN TO PROTECT MONITORS BOMBARDING BELGIAN COAST.

was promptly exploded. Immediately afterwards a submarine slowly rose to the surface.

The *Ghurka* and *Maori* both opened fire, and one of their shells struck the conning tower of the submarine just as her captain appeared through the hatch with his hands above his head in the attitude of surrender.

He was slightly burned in the back of the neck by the shell. The remaining destroyers hurried to the scene, boats were lowered and every one of the crew of the enemy submarine was saved. The vessel proved to be "U 8." She was taken in tow by H.M.S. *Ure*, a "river" class destroyer which had now become one of the Sixth Flotilla.

The Germans, however, did not mean their vessel to be captured in this way; they had opened the sea cocks and their boat was rapidly sinking. She lay for a short time on the surface with a heavy list, for all the world like a great disabled fish, then she sank in sixteen fathoms of water. Her crew were taken into Dover and placed on board the *Arrogant*, parent ship for our own submarines.

That night "U 8's" captain and officers had a good dinner on board and our own submarine officers, after a few gentlemanly leg-pulls, invited their prisoners to sing the "Hymn of Hate."

The captains of the *Ghurka* and *Maori* were awarded the D.S.O. for this, and several D.S.M.'s were given to their crews. The man who pressed the firing key and blew up the submarine with the "modified sweep" deserved his D.S.M., for it was an achievement equal to the slaying of a lion with the jawbone of an ass.

There were many occasions when we in the "Dover family" had every reasonable excuse for thinking that we had bagged submarines; it was a thankless task, this hunting business, when we were so deficient in arms to meet them with. The Admiralty devised more and more schemes and invented weapon after weapon with which to assist our efforts, and we were only too ready to give them a trial. I heard from one of my old Antarctic Expedition mates that, amongst the inventive suggestions for the destruction of the enemy submarine, the following were sent in to the Board of Inventions and Research, where he was employed:—

I. Put an enormous quantity of "Eno's fruit salt" into the sea in the English Channel.

The result will be a great change in the specific gravity of the water, consequently any submerged submarines will either sink or float. If they sink, well and good; if they float, destroyers and seaplanes can rush out and destroy them.

II. The English Channel should be so filled with ships that there would be no room for a submarine to come up and fire her torpedoes.

Naturally the submarine sinkings depended on the number of patrol craft, etc., and on the output of anti-submarine devices.

Whatever may be said on the subject, the Allies only sank about half-a-dozen submarines in the first half-year of the war, and the following table shows how, in spite of all the howling in certain sections of the Press, the submarine sinkings went up in a way that must have put the fear of God into all but the most valourous of

the "kultured curs" whom the Kaiser delighted to honour.

Year.					Average number of Submarines sunk.		
1914	..	..	..	..	1	per	month
1915	..	..	..	..	1.5	"	"
1916	..	..	..	..	2	"	"
1917	..	..	..	..	5.5	"	"
1918	..	..	..	..	7	"	"

CHAPTER IV

THE AUXILIARY PATROL

EARLY in 1915 we had a great deal of assistance through the development of that magnificent service, "The Auxiliary Patrol."

To begin with, it was composed of two sections:—

I. The Trawler Patrol.

II. The Drifter Patrol.

The Trawler Patrol was under the control of Captain (retired) W. Vansittart Howard, R.N., who also was at the head of the Dover mine-sweeping administration. The trawlers were armed and they worked such patrols as were obviously unsuitable for destroyers. They were very slow moving compared to our light and dainty vessels, but they did yeoman patrol service close to the coasts and between the shoals, besides being employed as mine-layers, mine-sweepers and in a dozen other ways.

The drifters, which first came under Captain Humphrey W. Bowring, R.N., were used to place nets across the fairway of the Straits of Dover. We experimented with various schemes for net-laying, but the general idea was that light nets, supported by surface floats, were stretched across the channel between Dover and Cape Grisnez and watched by the small wooden steam fishing vessels known as drifters.

By a study of the tides, it became a reasonably easy proposition to place these nets in such a fashion that a continuous line reached across the Channel and this line

drifted between the Varne Shoal to the westward and the outer Ruytingen Shoal to the eastward. Providing the weather was reasonably fine, the nets would not require lifting; if the winds were strong the nets would drift up too far and then the drifters would haul them in and re-shoot them as directed. There were about half-a-dozen boats in the division, and each division had an R.N.R. sub-lieutenant or lieutenant in charge. An armed yacht, usually commanded by a naval officer, attended on the drifters and took command of the whole.

The drifters' crews were wonderful, and considering the changed conditions they were called upon to face, I think these fishermen take rank in the first row of those who go down to the sea in ships. I am proud to have been associated in the Dover Patrol with this crowd.

If a submarine passed through the nets, the net-line would contract and speed away up or down the channel, and the drifter would stand by to attack with bomb-lance, a sort of giant hand grenade which was the precursor of the far more efficient depth charge. She would also signal to the nearest destroyer which was patrolling in conjunction, and whatever means were available, according to the war-epoch, would then be ready at hand to attack with. Theoretically, the scheme was excellent, but in practice it did not yield any very great results. The long runs of bad weather made it difficult to keep the nets in more than very approximate position.

The submarines took to passing through by night, running I believe, with their conning towers just awash, ready to dive if attacked.

They seldom, if ever, attacked the patrol boats, as they were out for bigger game.

A German submarine captain once told me that he would keep his torpedoes for a thousand-ton merchant ship in preference to sinking a destroyer or even a small cruiser. He said we had so many light cruisers and patrol craft that the loss of one or two did not matter to England, but the loss of merchant tonnage was undoubtedly losing us the war. Well, it didn't, anyway!

But to go on with the Auxiliary Patrol. Things were moving by 1915, and Dover Harbour was becoming more and more congested; it was so full of ships, big and little, that in the bad weather it reminded one of a bucket of water being carried along with about a hundred different sized corks floating in it.

Collisions were frequent, and one wondered, not why they so often occurred, but why they did not occur with far greater frequency.

We all pulled together extremely well, although Admiral Hood soon found that he had a very mixed team to drive. The auxiliary patrol skippers and deck hands came from all parts, including Hull, Aberdeen, and the Shetlands, and some of those employed found great difficulty in even reading the orders which were issued to them from time to time. However, whatever their educational drawbacks, every man jack in the Auxiliary Patrol had acquired the "habit of the sea."

The discipline question was a difficult one, and naval punishments could not fairly be applied to willing fishermen, (who would work their hands to the bone for the country's sake), if they occasionally had a glass too much or in some petty fashion misconducted themselves during their resting time in port.

It sometimes happened that the patrolling vessels got a little way out of their proper course. I fear that the

destroyers usually put the blame on to the auxiliary patrols when this happened, but, on one dark night, the —— moved into the midst of a lot of drifters from Ramsgate, and they forthwith challenged her. The destroyer took no notice and the senior officer of the Ramsgate Patrol being on board one of the drifters, he insisted on a reply. None was forthcoming, and so, taking a megaphone, Captain ——, R.N., shouted angrily, "What destroyer is that?" "Oh! Go to hell," was the ——'s reply. The challenging then ceased and Captain ——, R.N., reported the matter in writing to the Admiral. In the letter he wrote, "The language used in replying to my hail convinced me that I was talking to a friend."

Food became more and more expensive in Dover as the number of vessels based on the command increased. A welcome addition to the small ships' larders was afforded by a gratuitous issue of fish from one of the trawlers, which was allowed to trawl on our behalf. Fat plaice and whiting, Dover soles and turbot came occasionally our way, and little dietary changes of this sort all helped to cheer, and we wanted cheering at times for we got the coldest welcome imaginable from the grey winter weather and the succession of gales and rain.

Although not patrollers, I must introduce our friends the oilers; they were certainly auxiliaries to the patrolling forces; one lay in Dover Harbour, always at our disposal; and of the oilers, perhaps the *Eupion* was best known. Destroyers were supplied with oil day and night by the *Eupion*; her mate, who never seemed to sleep, was an American citizen of Scotch parentage. He was a fairly old man, but I never saw him out of temper. He was so willing to help us that we, in return,

made him a welcome guest in the *Viking's* wardroom, where he often disposed of tea and hot-buttered toast which our sub-lieutenant made for us at the stove and handed out in relays. I don't mean to say that we never offered the mate of the *Eupion* anything stronger than tea; we did, and he accepted it when times were fairly quiet.

The *Eupion*, if I remember right, was not one of the vessels classed as Royal Fleet Auxiliaries. Some of the oilers were, and their crews were under a special Admiralty agreement; I think it rejoiced in the name of Agreement Form T. 124.Z.

I heard of a very smart fireman who had only joined up for the war, and signed on under T. 124.Z. He had come down to Dover to join one of the Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, and in rendering his travelling expenses account, he inserted a charge of 5s. for a cab fare from the Burlington Hotel to the Naval Pier. This amount was actually paid him, which is one against the Admiralty, for those who know Dover will appreciate that the distance is only about 60 yards.

CHAPTER V

FLAG CHANGES AND SOME MORE BELGIAN COAST WORK

IN the spring of 1915, Rear-Admiral R. H. S. Bacon, D.S.O., was appointed to command the Dover Patrol; our gallant and brilliant Admiral Hood was transferred to a sea-going command, and subsequently he hoisted his flag in the battle cruiser *Invincible*, as Rear-Admiral of the Third Battle Cruiser Squadron. To our lasting regret in the Sixth Flotilla, we heard a year later of the loss of this splendid Admiral friend of ours at the Battle of Jutland.

Admiral Beatty spoke in the Jutland despatch of the magnificent manner in which Rear-Admiral Hon. H. L. A. Hood, C.B., M.V.O., D.S.O., brought his squadron into action, saying, "I desire to record my great regret at his loss, which is a national misfortune." In the earlier part of the same despatch Admiral Beatty, speaking of the Third Battle Cruiser Squadron, commanded by Admiral Hood, said, "I ordered them to take station ahead, which was carried out magnificently, Rear-Admiral Hood bringing his squadron into action ahead in a most inspiring manner, worthy of his great naval ancestors."

Admiral Bacon had to face greater difficulties than his predecessor, for the Germans were launching submarines at an alarming rate. If they could be prevented

from passing through the English Channel, the ocean-going submarines from Wilhelmshaven, would lose about a week's effective time out of each cruise.

To make submarines pass to the northward of the British Isles, the Dover Straits had to be blocked. In 1915 we were unable to do this effectively, because the necessary material was not then available. A barrage was placed between Folkestone and Grisnez, which was a menace to the submarines; but the strong tides and heavy weather played havoc with it.

The wire entanglements were supported by a large number of mooring buoys, and every now and again one of these enormous buoys would break away and drift about the Channel. A number of them stranded on the Belgian coast, while others went ashore on the Goodwins; they were a menace to navigation but, to the credit of the look-outs of the Dover patrol, no collision ever occurred with one of them.

A much better barrage with mine-nets was placed across the Channel in 1916. It extended from the South Goodwin to the Snouw Bank off Dunkirk, and for some time this kept submarines out of the Channel. They did not like these barrages, but the submarines eventually were fitted with net cutters and, after a few had successfully won through the Straits of Dover, the Germans became more daring and used the Straits with much greater frequency. The result was that the sinkings of merchant ships went up alarmingly and other measures eventually were adopted, which, as will be seen later, upset the Hun once more.

Admiral Bacon very truly stated that it was a case of "going one better" always. First the enemy invented some offensive weapon and then the Allies counter-

invented. In every case the enemy's triumph lasted only until the remedy was "put on the market."

In the summer of 1915, the Dover Patrol commenced to harass the Hun from the sea again. A number of monitors had been built during the winter for offensive action in the various theatres of war, but they were not ready until about July, and in consequence the enemy was left pretty well alone to fortify the Belgian coast from the Dutch frontier to Nieuport. He certainly did it well, but his defences were not so wonderful this year as after the second winter, when they were really worthy of admiration.

It was trying to the Admiral's patience for him to find that the monitors, which eventually became part of his command, were not to be relied upon. They had been roughly and hurriedly constructed, and the 12-inch turrets taken from old battleships of the *Majestic* class, fell short of his expectations.

The commands of monitors were eagerly sought after by commanders and junior captains, who were anxious for some fun, and eventually we had six of them:—

<i>Sir John Moore</i>	..	..	Commander S. R. Miller.
<i>Prince Rupert</i>	..	..	Commander H. O. Reinold.
<i>Prince Eugene</i>	..	..	Captain E. Wigram.
<i>Lord Clive</i>	..	..	Commander C. Carter.
<i>General Crauford</i>	..	..	Commander E. Altham.
<i>General Wolfe</i>	..	..	Commander N. Diggle.

mounting a couple of 12-inch guns as their main armament, and a few guns of small calibre for anti-aircraft and anti-destroyer purposes.

The first three to arrive were the *Sir John Moore*, *Prince Rupert*, and *Lord Clive*. Their speed was hardly greater than $6\frac{1}{2}$ knots, although the "greyhounds" of the squadron boasted they could do 8. The load dis-

placement of these vessels was about 5,900 tons. Their length was about 335 feet and beam nearly 90. They were fitted with bulges, which made them practically innocuous to torpedo attack, and they only drew 10½ feet of water. They waddled about like great ducks and were the butt of the destroyer officers' wit. The monitor captains were always conscious of the absurdity of their vessels' sea-going appearance, but they smilingly kept going whatever they were up against.

About the time the monitors made their bow on the stage of the Belgian coast operations, Admiral Bacon selected the *Viking* to be his particular destroyer in which to move about the Patrol. It was not very pleasing to our Captain (D) to have one of his fastest and best armed destroyers practically withdrawn from the general duties, which were heavy, to say the least of it. But an Admiral is an Admiral and can choose what vessel he likes from his command, and so it came to pass that in 1915 I saw much more of what was going on than any other Dover destroyer captain.

We had an unlucky start with the monitors. The working gear of the turrets was not all it might be; they felt the operation of being hurriedly put out of the *Majestic*, where they had done good service, and being rebuilt into the monitors; actually they showed signs of being a dismal failure.

The Admiral and his staff, assisted by the crews of the monitors, did all in their power to hustle the turrets into good working order, but they had a fearful task in front of them. The monitors were shepherded together in a channel amongst the shoals and sandbanks which lie in the Thames estuary. The place selected was Middle Deep, and here, away from the sight of all, their crews

were exercised and practised, their turrets were worked and their guns fired until, by process of elimination, the numerous defects were made good and the slow steaming squadron prepared to bring off a surprise bombardment of the Belgian coast. How glad those in the monitors must have been when at last three of the ships were really ready for action. I myself had made many a trip to Chatham and Sheerness with the Admiral, who himself could then be seen carrying a great piece of piping or some other component part of the turret gear for repair or replacement "with all possible despatch." I never saw a man with such obstinate energy or such firmness of purpose.

The first bombardment was directed against the military defences, ammunition factories, harbour works and lock-gates at Zeebrugge. The procession of ships had to leave its anchorage in time to ensure being in position for bombarding by daylight. For the first Zeebrugge bombardment we had to cross from the Thames estuary *via* the Galloper Shoal and make a long *détour* to the northward in order to avoid the English minefields. A more extraordinary flotilla was surely never seen.

The Admiral flew his flag on the monitor *Sir John Moore*; following him came the *Lord Clive* and *Prince Rupert*, and in attendance were destroyers, drifters, yachts and mine-sweepers, also four large steam lighters named the *Bickford*, *Lewin*, *Gransha* and *Curran*. At the standard monitor sea-speed of six knots, the procession moved across the North Sea. The sweepers, old paddle-wheel pleasure boats, led the way, sweeping for mines in the path of this unusual squadron.

The destroyers scouted on the flanks and zig-zagged ahead and astern. We scouted at from 12 to 15 knots

speed, and our constant appearances and disappearances as we worked around the squadron in the darkness must have been very nerve-racking to the drifters, which were steaming in two lines to port and starboard of the monitors. There were no collisions, however, and the station-keeping was good, which was creditable to those in the small auxiliary vessels, who had never worked with a squadron, and were unaccustomed to alter course movements *en masse* by dark.

Fortunately we had fine still weather, and still more fortunately we were not molested by the enemy, for our destroyer force was not strong, and it was of necessity split up into half-penny numbers by the nature of its look-out work. A single division of well-organised destroyers could have made mince-meat out of the drifters and mine-sweepers in no time. The monitors could not have used their 12-inch guns, and they had no secondary armament at that time worthy of the name. The fighting force available consisted of half-a-dozen Tribals and a couple of thirty-knotters, which could not easily have got together in time to put up any good fight.

But Admiral Bacon was like the fellow in Old Luke Oie's "Green Curve," who learned the inclination and character of his adversary; he just about sized up the Hun and did precisely what he liked with the material at his disposal. The Admiral took his very immobile squadron about as he pleased, and so far from interfering with his plans at all, the German Navy might not have existed. We had to prepare against submarine attacks, but we were never inconvenienced by them in any coast bombardments.

The difficulties of spotting were a great handicap, and

in order to make sure of doing military damage, the Admiral had conceived the idea of placing tall tripods on the shallow banks off the coast, to be used as observation stations. These tripods were constructed in Dover and used for rehearsal purposes when the monitors did their bombardment practice runs in the Thames estuary.

Before daybreak, on August 23rd, the four tripod carriers had taken up their appointed positions and lowered their tripods on to the selected shoals. The light was all in our favour. To seaward, a dark sky made the tripod carriers invisible to the batteries ashore, while the prominent objects on the low-lying coast were boldly silhouetted against a good light skyline. As day broke, it found the monitors in line abreast, in perfect position for the appointed operation. The *Sir John Moore* fired her first round to time almost within a second. The observers, perched on the small platforms which surmounted the tripods, carefully noted the fall of shot and flashed back by oxy-acetylene lamp the results. Two sets of observers, well practised at this work, were necessary, and once the signals were received on board the monitors, the shots were quickly plotted and the guns lifted onto the target with the various corrections applied. Everything worked according to plan; the tripods were quite close to the shore, but they were so small and the background of dark sky was so bad, that the enemy can hardly have noticed their presence. The bombardment was undertaken at high water and the tops of the tripods were only three or four feet out of the sea.

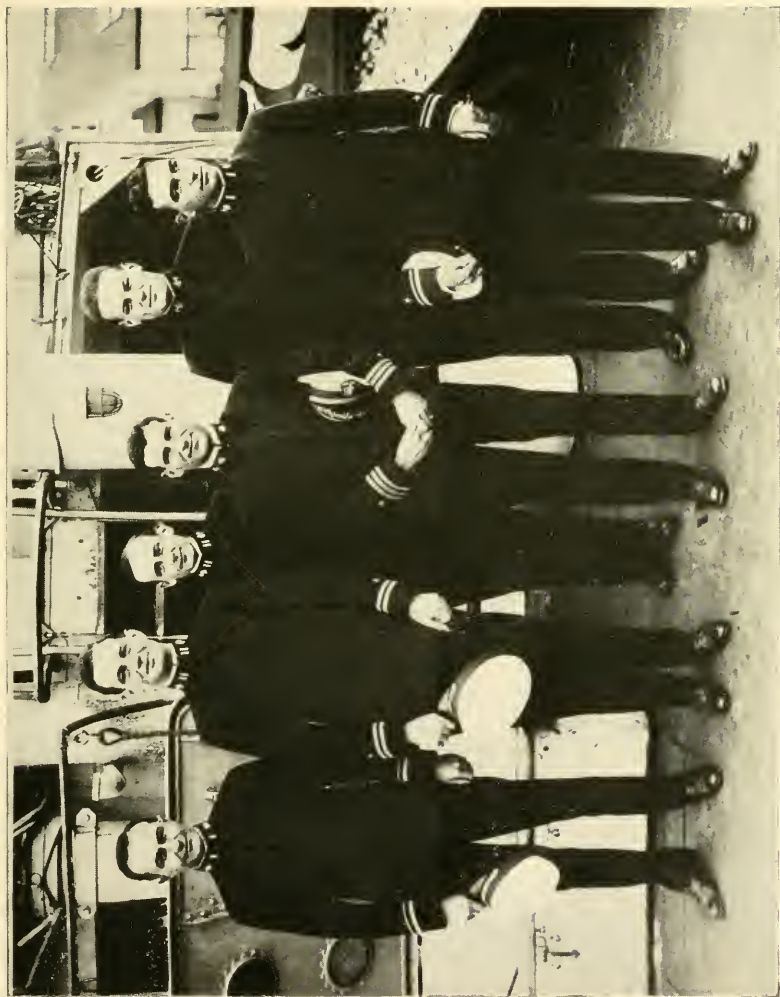
The attendant carrier-vessels, with two drifters for life-saving purposes, stood by a half-mile or so away. These vessels were seen indistinctly and a number of salvoes was fired at them from shore batteries, but the enemy cannot have seen the monitors, as no shot was

fired near them. While the bombardment continued, the little drifters spread their nets as an anti-submarine zareba around the firing ships. They might have been quietly fishing for herrings; no one on board took the slightest notice of the shore batteries efforts. A division of destroyers tripped daintily up and down the net line to shoreward of the drifters and two or three more patrolled to seaward, lest by chance a casual submarine might catch the monitors unawares and get into position for torpedoing, whilst all eyes were interestedly gazing at the shore-line.

The chill, moist morning air seemed to work through our damp clothing, and the night's vigil made some of us heavy of eyelid, but one could not help feeling amused at the spectacle which presented itself.

As the sun rose, the shore line showed up better and better, the chimneys of Solvey Factory stood clear out against the sky and the bombardment was concluded in deliberate and peaceful fashion, like the closing of a text-book. Everything had gone aright, with the exception of the number of rounds fired, which were fewer than intended, on account of defects which developed in the turrets of the *Sir John Moore* and *Prince Rupert*. The *Lord Clive* got off her full number of shells, and we fired quite enough to satisfy our enemies.

The signal to conclude the operation was made. The monitors waddled their unwieldy forms into single line ahead, the mine-sweepers continued their exploratory sweep, the tripods were once more approached, their observers re-embarked and the tall, trellis-work structures capsized on the sandbanks by their attendant vessels, the transport ships, who in their turn fell into line and slowly steamed after the monitors. The little drifters hauled their empty nets aboard, and their di-



CAPTAIN TAUSSIG AND THE OFFICERS OF U.S.S. "WADSWORTH."

visional leaders hoisted the flag which told them in their simple code to "follow father home"; their solemn-faced North country firemen put on another shovelful of coal and little wisps of smoke stole towards the zenith to tell the long, black, waiting destroyers that the procession was now complete and that their captains might go off their bridges to get their weary heads down on the flat, damp chart-house cushions and take a couple of hours' rest.

CHAPTER VI

BOMBARDMENTS AND A FEW DIVERSIONS

"THE BELGIAN COAST."

The A.D.P. stood on the bridge,
Manœuvering his ships,
Taking them as usual,
For one of their morning trips.

He took them out of Dunkirk Road,
He took them to La Panne,
He turned them sixteen points to port
And brought them back again.

The monitors with blistered sides,
All bulgeous, and their guns
Are cocked up high into the sky
To flatten out the Huns.

The anti-aircraft guns are manned,
But no one cares a bit,
For neither bomb nor aircraft gun
Has ever scored a hit.

The T.B.D.'s cruise round the fleet,
They do it night and day,
The only signal that they get
Is, "Get out of my way."

The sweepers sweep at early dawn,
Their paddles keep on flapping.
And woe betide the Prussian mine,
They happen to catch napping.

The drifters drift with nets in place,
Deep in the sea so green,
Though sometimes muddy, though sometimes
brown,
To "straffe" a submarine.

The seaplane ship sends up her birds,
They circle in the cloud,
The Prussian airmen flutter off,
To fight they are too proud.

The airmen in the kite balloon
Are floating on the breeze,
They get a pound a day for that,
What lucky men are these!

And this we do at dawn each day,
In weather calm or choppy,
But not a Hun or Prussian gun
Is seen by Mr. Shoppey.*

The moral is let's keep our heads,
And let us all remember,
A misty morn, a hazy dawn,
Is certain in September.

"NUBIAN NONSENSE."

THE foregoing poem illustrates the feelings of a very junior destroyer captain who had less patience than zeal. But it is quite true that the September early morning mists interfered greatly with our work. For instance, after several vain attempts at bombarding Ostend, the weather showed up favourably, and a composite squadron, very similar to that described in the last chapter, set out on the morning of September 7th, 1915, to carry out the bombardment of the harbour works at Ostend. But spotting conditions were impossible, and although everything was ready and in position for the prescribed operation, we were reluctantly forced to abandon our programme on account of a low mist, which hid everything, including the lighthouse which was to be used as our aiming mark, or zero point, to work from. We had several targets that day, and it was most disappointing to see the flotilla crawling back to an anchorage off Dunkirk without firing a shot.

*See end of Chapter.

The Germans knew all about it, however, and so the element of surprise had to be cut out. The "Taubes" and "Albatross" machines circled round like great birds and took stock of all that was to be seen. No sooner had we anchored than they proceeded to bomb us good and true. Bombing was not taken seriously by the Dover Patrol in those days, for we had read in neutral newspapers how Lieut. von Longbow or whatever he called himself, had won the Iron Cross for bombing Dover Harbour.

Whatever he thought he did, von Longbow dropped his bombs well outside the harbour. But on this day, September 7th, a small bomb hit the *Attentive*, the ship of the Captain (D). Two were killed and seven injured and a 4-inch gun was disabled. No other successes were registered from enemy air attacks for one whole year after this in the Dover Command, and so we did not trouble our heads about aerial interference. Again and again the bombs fell into the water, while we leisurely ate our midday meal. But the mist dispersed at last, and on the p.m. flood tide another attempt was made to carry out our bombardment. The old *Redoubtable* had been fitted with bulges like a monitor, but she drew a great deal of water and was, I believe, employed to fire from the West Deep on the buildings used by the Germans as barracks at Westende. Her spotting was done from tripods, which were soon discovered by the enemy when the mists cleared off.

The 12-inch monitors came into position very nicely and opened fire on their objectives. The first shot hit the aiming mark and knocked over the lighthouse. This was unfortunate, because when the tripod observers glanced through their telescopes at the zero mark, it had

disappeared, and during the delay which followed, the enemy fired some 11-inch shells, two or three of which struck the *Lord Clive* without exploding. Whether by bomb explosion or gunfire, I do not know, but Commander Bickford's tripod had the top blown off and his observing station was out of action. No spotting results were being obtained from the tripods, and as the *Lord Clive* was being hit to no purpose, the signal was made to abandon the operation. The *Viking*, with the *Tartar* standing by, moved shoreward, while the bombarding squadron slowly steamed out of range. The *Viking* embarked Lieut. Commander Lewin and party from the western tripod.

Owing to the strong tide, when I put my six-funnelled "freak" destroyer alongside the tripod, the vessel was swept rather strongly against the trellis-work tower and consequently capsized it. The two signal ratings clambered on board, but Lewin dived into the sea to avoid being knocked over. We picked him up quickly, and congratulated him on being the only Englishman to bathe in public off Ostend this summer season.

A desultory fire was kept up on the *Viking* and *Tartar* but to no purpose. We, in the *Viking*, steamed down to meet the little drifter, which had rescued those under Commander Bickford, formerly the observation party for the eastern tripod. We took them on board, hoisted the small boat in which they were being towed and then shepherded the drifter out of the danger zone. We came back to do the same for the net drifters, which had already got in their anti-submarine nets; as usual the drifters' crews, although under fire for some time, behaved with the most exemplary coolness, carefully stowing their nets on board; they were perfectly undaunted.

No words of mine can ever express the admiration I felt for those cheery, willing fishermen; once again we felt it was an honour for the *Viking* to stand by them to help, if help were needed. Captain Frederick G. Bird, R.N., was in charge of the drifter divisions, and Commander G. W. C. Venn, R.N.R., his second in command.

After all had withdrawn, since I had been directed to attend on the *Lord Clive* (flag), I closed her, and was sent on ahead to find a certain light buoy which marked the end of a channel through our minefields.

We steamed the requisite course and distance, and then finding no buoy I stopped and anchored. It was almost dark by this time, and having failed to find the buoy, which I concluded had been sunk, I turned a strong light towards the slowly following squadron, and, copying the characteristics of the light on the buoy, I hoped to be sighted by the monitors and made use of. I could not use wireless, which might have given our positions away. We were sighted about 11 p.m., and then we weighed and continued until the Kentish Knock light was sighted, when the Admiral boarded my ship and returned full speed to Dover. The monitors went back to their hiding-place to await some fresh laid scheme.

A fortnight later, we re-appeared on the Belgian coast with something that we anticipated would out-hun the Hun. We had spent the intervening time in practising making smoke screens and in perfecting the gunnery practice of a monitor mounting two really modern 15-inch guns.

This ship was the *Marshal Ney*, and she was a curious-looking floating fort of 6,679 tons, propelled by

Diesel engines. There were difficulties in getting these engines to work, difficulties that led the *Marshall Ney* into trouble again and again.

On September 20th we carried out some good bombarding work, our spotting being done by shore observation stations and also by kite balloons. The forenoon work was not very exciting, but it was good to see the huge 15-inch guns of the *Marshall Ney* cocked up skywards, belching their cordite smoke into the skies. None of the enemy's shells hit the bombarding squadron, and we had it our own way until the afternoon, when the *Marshall Ney* went close inshore and moved up to La Panne. There is a narrow passage leading from off La Panne into the West Deep. To assist the *Marshall Ney* I worked through this passage in the *Viking*, hoisting small flags on either side, which told the monitor the depth in feet. She got into position and commenced the bombardment, when suddenly she became unmanageable, for her engines broke down, and she commenced to drift ashore. The enemy got her range, and shell after shell whistled through the air and plunked into the sea alongside her. There was nothing to be done to stop the *Marshall Ney* drifting ashore, unless she dropped her anchor; this she did, and we in the *Viking* made a beautiful smoke screen which effectually hid her from view; then under cover of this black screen we steamed quickly alongside, took a towing wire on board and gently moving ahead the *Viking* turned the *Marshall Ney's* bow westward, and with the most delicate increases of speed, got her going towards Dunkirk. It is interesting to note in this connection that the huge monitor was of such shallow draught that, once we got her going, she towed quite easily, and when we were steaming revolutions

for twelve knots in the *Viking*, we were towing the monitor along at eight knots.

Apparently the *Attentive* became anxious on our account and we received a W.T. message asking "Where is *Viking*?" I replied, "We are towing *Marshal Ney* back to Dunkirk."

My sub-lieutenant, who was on board the *Attentive*, heard my reply read out, and witnessed the mirth occasioned, but when the jeers had subdued, the sub-lieutenant looked out of a scuttle and saw the *Viking* towing the *Marshal Ney* past the *Attentive*. He ran up on deck, to see better and signalled with his hands, "They don't believe it." The first lieutenant semaphored back, "Tell the monkeys to look out of their cage at the zebra and giraffe." I thought it was rather a good reply, for the *Viking* was now painted in a coat of striped camouflage, and the *Marshal Ney*, with a single huge tripod mast towering above us, had an awkward, giraffe-like appearance. To put it in plain English, the *Marshal Ney* was a dead failure, thanks to her Diesel engines.

Once more the *Marshal Ney* cocked up her guns to bombard, but one of her engines broke down and she became unmanageable; her captain dare not stop her other engine on account of the starting difficulties, and so she slowly turned circles until the Admiral, thoroughly disgusted with her and her Diesel engines, ordered me to take her in tow. The *Viking* repeated the effort of the previous day, and my dainty little destroyer led the great unmanageable monster out of action like a very small boy leading a broken-down cab horse away to the slaughterhouse. The *Marshal Ney* was now officially recognised as being a failure, and she was returned to her dockyard, disarmed and given some lighter guns. She

afterwards was used as a floating fort in the Downs. On September 21st, we carried out another bombardment from the West Deep and we employed sea-planes, kite balloons and the shore observation stations for spotting with three independent sets of observers. The spotting was as good as one could wish for in those days.

Other bombardments were undertaken with more or less success by the 12-inch monitors this season, but none I believe succeeded as well as that of August 23rd, when we were credited with having inflicted the following damage:—

Two dredges sunk,
Two submarines sunk,
One factory partly destroyed,
Solvey factory destroyed.
First lock (écluse) destroyed.

What effect our bombardment had on the *morale* of the German troops can only be gathered by taking notice of the extent of the enemy-adopted counter-measures. In these days when peace is close at hand, one cannot walk anywhere on the Belgian coast without coming across a continuous barrage of barbed wire entanglements and a perfect chain of heavy gun batteries and defences. The batteries are in some cases boldly dated 1915, so that it is evident the Germans "had the wind up," and were not at all happy about attacks from the sea.

Of the stunts undertaken to worry, annoy and puzzle our enemies, perhaps the most amusing took place in September, 1915, when I was sent by Admiral Bacon to give a firework display at Ostend. The whole story is rather comic, but it was one of those operations or rather tricks that can only be played once.

The Admiral had received an intimation that the

Commander-in-Chief of our armies in France wished us to do all we could to keep the German troops on the coast, presumably in order that they could not be utilised at the time of our Western Front attacks.

The Admiral considered that it would be inadvisable to risk destroyers over the German minefields, of which the existence, but not the position, was known. He accordingly gave me two oil-burning torpedo boats of the class known as the "Oily Wads." These were withdrawn from the Downs, where they were used as a patrol for the protection of shipping, and handed over for the occasion. Brackets were fitted along both sides of the boats to hold socket distress signals, and a large supply of rockets was taken on board.

A programme for the organised firework display was drawn up and the crews of the tiny vessels given a dummy run at their firework stations. The boats proceeded in the afternoon by the northward route over to the North Hinder light vessel, and thence to the Middlekerke Bank.

The night was very dark, but calm, and everything was in readiness for immediate action in case we met enemy patrol vessels, or a submarine entering or leaving Ostend near the time of high water. We worked closer and closer towards Ostende until it appeared impossible for us to escape detection; searchlights were working on the coast, slowly sweeping to and fro, and star shells could be seen to the southward flickering in the sky. They were evidently fired at certain definite intervals.

We had decided that it would be unsafe to remain off the port after 2 a.m., when the tide would have fallen sufficiently to make navigation over minefields a foolhardy business. We hoped most earnestly to run across

a submarine, for she would not have been very ready to dive when trimmed for navigating near the Ostend Banks; and had we met one, it would have meant her certain destruction.

About 1 a.m., when all eyes were accustomed to the darkness, what appeared to be the conning tower of a submarine, suddenly presented itself almost dead ahead of the leading torpedo boat; engines were put at full speed, a touch was given to the helm and we had almost rammed the supposed enemy vessel when a dismal howl arose, a second before the foremost 12-pounder gun had been laid on the object. Those on the bridge realised that, instead of a submarine, we were attacking one of the whistle buoys which mark the Belgian coast sandbanks. The helm was quickly put over to avoid a collision and the boat astern of us warned. The buoy passed along our port side, almost touching the frail torpedo boat. Everybody burst out laughing, our supposed enemy gave another dismal groan, and that was all our submarine hunt yielded for the night.

The time passed very quickly and, at 1.50 a.m., not daring to remain any longer over this mined area, I blew the pre-arranged signal on a whistle, and then another blast. From the two torpedo boats three bouquets of rockets, port fires, Very's lights and star bombs ascended; the display was repeated after a minute's interval, and the absurdity of the situation made me laugh until I nearly fell into the sea. What the Germans thought, I never heard until I met some of those who had been at Ostend all through the war. Comparing the dates, one realised that the enemy had been seriously alarmed and preparations made for repelling a landing.

We were very proud of that firework display, and I

am sure that the Germans, who so little understand the English, would have sent out any available craft to destroy us had they known that two feeble little vessels were so close to the shores they occupied; it was almost possible to knock a hole in these with a good fisherman's boathook. To those in the torpedo boats the evening's "stunt" was merely a joy ride.

We turned northward at 2 a.m. and steamed away into the darkness. Suddenly, however, the whole coast line was illuminated, and it appears that many star-shells were fired out to sea. The second boat signalled "Regret can only keep up 13 knots." This was not much good to us because we naturally imagined that the enemy would send out what they had to attack us when they saw our two small torpedo boats. The armament of the squadron consisted only of four 12-pounder guns and six 14-inch torpedo tubes. I reduced speed to keep in company with our boat, and then a pathetic signal blinked forth from the shaded signal lamp of the boat astern—the signalman spelt out, "We are being followed by four large ships."

There was nothing for it except to turn round and attack, for we could not run away at 13 knots, and I did not propose to leave my companion ship. We commenced to turn round in order to begin the engagement, hoping to sink or damage one ship at least, but realising that we had very little chance, when our companion again signalled, and we made out "Annul my signal, they are only lights on Ostend pier." I confess I was very relieved, for we had no speed in those boats with which to manœuvre and we could have been run down by any kind of modern destroyer.

My sub-lieutenant from the *Viking*, who had gone

with me, asked if I wanted to make any further signal. I laughed and replied, "Yes, make T.G." The sub-lieutenant said, "What do you mean, sir?" I said "Thank God," and off we toddled homewards.

We were back in Dover again long before people were awake; the torpedo boats were completed with oil fuel preparatory to returning to the Downs patrol, and nobody watching us bathing in Dover Harbour from the *Viking* realised that we had had a night out. I doubt if anybody but the Vice-Admiral even knew of our escapade. These little parties were welcomed by destroyer officers as departures from the dull routine patrolling, and later, when destroyers were fitted as mine-layers, they became very frequent occurrences.

In the first three years of the war, the only casualty that ever occurred to the Dover torpedo craft, during coastal reconnaissances, took place on May 7th, 1915, when the *Maori* and the *Crusader* were sent along the Belgian coast to sketch some of the land marks. The *Maori* unfortunately struck a mine and was in a sinking condition when her crew took to their boats. The *Crusader* could not approach her on account of mines, but sent two boats' crews to her assistance. Before the *Maori* actually sank, her Captain, Commander Benjamin Barrow, destroyed all confidential books and memoranda, lest they should subsequently be recovered by divers and be of use to the enemy.

Unfortunately, the loss of the *Maori* was witnessed from the enemy positions, and whenever the *Crusader* approached near the boats which were pulling out to meet her, she was heavily fired upon. The Captain of the *Maori* signalled to her to keep away as he did not

wish us to lose another destroyer by mine or gun-fire, for the sake of a handful of men.

The *Crusader* carried only a few seamen on account of her small armament, and when her boats were away, she stood off and on, hoping the *Maori's* could pull to seaward until they were out of range. It was an unfortunate situation, because when the two ships originally worked up the coast, the visibility was only about two miles. After the *Maori* struck the mine, the morning mists rolled away and the visibility became so good that it really was foolhardy for the *Crusader* to remain close to the shore batteries.

An enemy armed trawler eventually came out and took the boats' crews prisoners. These were the only officers and men from the Dover Patrol who fell into the hands of the enemy during the three and a half years I served in this command.

I can hardly close this chapter without a word about two of the Dover naval officers who worked ashore in connection with the bombardments and other naval efforts in our Patrol. The first is Commander W. G. H. Bickford, who was the principal officer in connection with Admiral Bacon's spotting tripod schemes.

Bickford had left the Navy some time before the war, but like most others, appeared at the outbreak of hostilities and offered his services in whatever capacity they might be found useful. Bickford was discovered by Admiral Bacon, who watched him unloading 15-inch howitzers and other heavy artillery in the Port of Havre. The light-hearted way in which he overcame all the difficulties of unloading, commended him to Admiral Bacon's notice as a "Handy Billy," he knowing no

French and his French labourers knowing no other language than their own.

I remember on September 7th, 1915, Commander Bickford was taken on board the *Viking* after he had been left on his spotting tripod for fourteen hours, when the bombarding squadron had withdrawn on account of mist.

He was to have had a little dinghy with him and an attendant drifter. Owing to other duties being assigned to the drifter, Bickford was left perched on his tripod with two signalmen; the tripod sank a little into the sand, and the tide rising, came to within nine inches of the top and it looked as if our friend would have to choose between a several thousand yards swim to Ostend, or a porpoise-like chase after the various ships that Admiral Bacon had, whose whereabouts he knew not. Apart from these discomforts, Bickford's weight, something over fifteen stone, caused him further unhappiness, sitting as he did on the grating-like top of his observation tower, and when eventually he was rescued and taken on board the *Viking*, a kind-hearted lieutenant asked him if he would not sit down; he replied, "Sit down! I don't care if I never sit down in my life again. I have a patchwork pattern on my quarterdeck from which I shall never recover."

We got him some refreshment on that occasion, and, as he had had no chance to sleep for thirty hours, I took him to my cabin, and told him to turn in. I then went in search of a brandy and soda, for he had been badly shaken when the Huns blew the top off his tripod. Armed with a drink, I returned to my cabin and, to my consternation and amusement, I found old Billy arrayed in my pyjamas; his measurement amidships was pro-

bably more than double mine. The pyjamas would not button up, nor would they tie up and for all the world, he looked like a bit of raw beef wrapped in butter muslin. Bickford was one of the Dover D.S.O.'s, and we all appreciated the fact that he thoroughly deserved it.

Lieut. D. G. G. Shoppey is another officer whose services were a valuable auxiliary to the Dover bombarding forces, and one who should also be mentioned here. Shoppey was landed from the *Amazon* in September, 1914, when the Germans made their first push along the coast of Flanders. He originally landed to establish and maintain communications between the military and naval forces, and was accompanied by a party of Marines with the machine guns from one of the small monitors. This party was subsequently annihilated, but Shoppey escaped and joined the Staff of Colonel Bridges, who was then in charge of the Belgian Military Mission.

Shoppey became our principal observer during bombardments, and, although a very young officer, his judgment was remarkable. He was full of energy and zeal; no sooner was he shelled out of one observation post than he would remove himself to another with the greatest possible *sang froid*. He had observation posts at Templar's Tower, the Café de l'Yser, the Station Hotel and Ramscapelle, among other places in and around Nieuport. It was to Shoppey that we were indebted for establishing our wireless communications and our visual signalling posts. He had only a very small staff of signalmen, who were as zealous as Shoppey himself.

Before finally saying good-bye to the tripod spotting arrangements, which were superseded by other devices, I once heard a distinguished official ask Admiral Bacon whom he got to sit on the tripod; his reply was "Oh!



TWELVE-INCH GUNS MOUNTED IN IMITATION BARN NEAR
ADINKERQUE, BY COMMANDER BICKFORD.

they are retired officers." In connection with these retired officers I heard a story, though it did not happen in the Dover Patrol. It is well known that many retired admirals joined the Naval Reserve as temporary commanders, for service with yachts and other vessels in the Auxiliary Patrol. One of these officers, distinguished in many wars before he retired, had come to report at the headquarters of a certain senior naval officer, who had a Royal Marine Light Infantry man for orderly. The senior naval officer was very busy, but the temporary R.N.R. commander was very pressing, and he continually urged the orderly to inform the S.N.O. of his presence, in spite of being informed that this officer was engaged on very important business.

At last the marine yielded and said he would do his best. He knocked at the S.N.O.'s door, walked in, and risked the scowls of his superior, "There is an officer whom I think you ought to see," said the marine. "I can see no one now," replied the S.N.O. "Well, I think you ought to see this one," urged the marine. "He is one of them there disgraced admirals, and he has medal ribbons like a rainbow on his chest. I think you ought to see him, sir," and the S.N.O. gave way.

CHAPTER VII

ESCORT WORK, A SECOND WINTER AND A BIT OF SALVAGE

THE second winter set in rather more severely than the first winter of the war; the monitors did an occasional shoot, but spent most of their time at anchor, and since destroyers were not required to work in conjunction with them, we returned to our patrolling and escort work.

The transports did wonderfully well. Running between Folkestone and Boulogne in fog, gale or calm, they stuck to their high speed and time-table punctuality, and we in the destroyers stuck rigidly to the transports. Hundreds of little close-packed khaki figures were jambed into each transport; how uncomfortable and unsheltered they looked! In the winter, spray dashed over the fast-running cross-channel steamers and, in spite of the wind screens rigged both sides of their decks, the soldiers often got wet through, and one could not help feeling that these men, who were going out to fight, would prefer to do so rather than stand on the draughty decks, to be soused in the sticky showers of cold, salt water.

The transport captains were the best hearted, cheeriest men one could wish for, their only anxiety being to do their utmost to help win the war. They certainly made good, and the seasoned merchant seamen and firemen who worked the vessels acquitted themselves admirably.

It was a pleasure to watch the transports handled by their commanders and, out of probably more than ten thousand crossings, they had but a couple of collisions, as far as I can remember. This speaks volumes for the careful and skilful way in which they were handled, for it must be remembered that they frequently navigated at 20 knots, without lights and with other vessels in close company. I think the *Leven* and *Cossack* collided with transports, but I never heard of the transports being in collision with one another.

On the occasion of the *Leven's* collision, I was out on night patrol in the *Viking*. It was on a dreadfully dark, wintry night, when we intercepted a plaintive little wireless message concerning the collision. The escort vessels had gone to the assistance of the troop transport, which, in her heavily-laden condition, would naturally require attention with her valuable human cargo of two thousand British soldiers. We moved away from the patrol line to succour which ever ship needed help; and on arriving at the scene of the accident, I was soon satisfied that the troop transport needed no help from the *Viking*. I then turned my attention to the *Leven*, now two or three miles away. I discovered her at last, and, switching on my searchlight, I found before me a most pathetic sight. The bow of this old-fashioned destroyer appeared to be flattened out of all recognition. She was drifting broadside to the swell, rolling about in the troughs of the waves in a manner calculated to make even an onlooker sea-sick. We worked the *Viking* close to her, and to windward, and then pumped oil overboard until there was a chance of getting close alongside. Once communication was established, I found that the *Leven* could not steam ahead, owing to the serious nature of

the damage. The wind was from the westward, and we were unpleasantly close to the French coast, south of Boulogne. After a megaphone conversation with her captain, whom I had brought up as a "Sub," I decided to tow the injured destroyer stern first. We soon got hold and moved her away from the coast. However, the tow parted in the seaway, and while the *Tartar* stood by us, I got my ship alongside the *Leven*, and being protected by large hazelwood fenders, which I had "accidentally" possessed myself of, I got thoroughly well secured to the *Leven*, with all our hawsers and theirs.

Lieut. E. J. B. Shouler, my No. 1, was a perfect glutton for salvage and towing, and a perfect genius for equalising the strain and distributing the pull. Thanks to his perfect seamanship, we held on to the *Leven* through the night, and by daybreak we had got under the lee of the Kentish coast, the wind having veered to the N.W. Once in the neighbourhood of Dover, the powerful tug, *Lady Crundell*, came to our assistance, and giving us a stout hawser to our bow, she manœuvred the pair of us safely to a buoy in Dover Harbour, where we found calm water and had time to study the *Leven's* damage. It was certainly pretty bad.

Connected with the foregoing incident, I must set down a short history, which had a humorous side as well as a gruesome one.

When the collision occurred, a poor fellow was severely injured through the collapse of the *Leven's* bow. After we had got our towing hawsers secured, we heard about the injured man, and I sent my coxswain down to ask if everything possible was being done for him. The coxswain returned and informed me of the man's pitiful condition. I sent out a W.T. signal to *Cossack*, asking

for the services of her surgeon probationer; the *Cossack* approached and the young man boarded us with some difficulty, in the bad weather. After the surgeon had had time to make an examination, I sent my coxswain down to report what was being done for the injured man, and the following dialogue took place:—

CAPTAIN. Is the man very bad?

COXSWAIN. Yes sir, 'is legs is all jambed up and broke.

CAPTAIN. Go down and tell the doctor to put him on a stretcher and get him into my cabin, if he can arrange to get from one ship to the other—wait for a lull.

COXSWAIN. (After descending from bridge to give message). I give the doctor the message, 'e says 'e daren't move the man jus' yet. But sir, you don't want 'im in that cabin of yours, 'es, all blood and 'e'd muck up the sheets frightful.

CAPTAIN. Never mind, you get the poor man down there, we can easily get new sheets later on when we are safely in harbour.

COXSWAIN. (Shaking his head, obviously unwilling). Aye, aye, sir.

(*Five minutes later*)—

COXSWAIN. The doctor says 'es too bad to be moved, but 'e thanks you all the same.

CAPTAIN. Can nothing be done for him?

COXSWAIN. No, sir. Why the bones of 'is legs is sticking right out through 'is flesh.

CAPTAIN. Good God!

COXSWAIN. Oh, you have no call to worry, sir, that's alright. Why 'E's only one of them there ullages that's joined up for the war.

This was the coxswain's tender way of setting my mind at rest.

I was very angry with him at the time, but I subsequently learnt that he was one of the most generous and kind-hearted of men. He was relieved in the *Viking* by C.P.O. Williamson, who was for a year boatswain of Captain Scott's exploring ship, the *Terra Nova*. Williamson was a great friend of mine, and one day, when I told him of his hard-hearted predecessor, he expressed surprise and told me how very good the other coxswain had been to all the younger ones, whom he had classed as "Them there *ullages* what's joined up for the war."

In December, 1915, while I was taking my turn with the Dunkirk Destroyer Division, a transport steamer, the *Southgarth*, full of trench material, bound for Dunkirk, ran past the port during the night, and, after passing over a great portion of the Traepegeer Bank, stranded near the buoy marking the north part of the shoal. She was abandoned by her crew about the 13th December, when, the weather being moderately fine, German aeroplanes came out to investigate. One of these flying machines arrived whilst a portion of the *Southgarth's* crew were in a boat quite close to her, and an apprentice, seeing the aeroplane flying low, pointed a small pistol at it. In reply, the aeroplane opened fire with her machine gun, without, however, hitting anyone.

The Commodore, Dunkirk, on being informed of the *Southgarth* grounding, moved out in the *Attentive* and took charge of the vessels at his disposal, with the idea of salving the grounded transport. The weather was too bad to do any salvage work on December 13th, so a destroyer patrol was kept in the West Deep to prevent

enemy interference. On the 14th, the weather was again fine enough for aeroplanes to work, and they came out from Ostend and dropped bombs all around us. A few shots were also fired by German batteries at the *Southgarth*, without doing any damage. One of the hostile aeroplanes dropped a line of great bombs close to, and parallel with the *Viking*, and one of our stokers, a New Zealand man named Williams, having watched the whole business, waved his hand and shouted out "That's right, Cooley, one for each funnel; if you wasn't so cock-eyed and so cocksure." Just after this another aeroplane appeared and we prepared to shoot at her with our only anti-aircraft defence, a couple of old-pattern maxims, but recognising her as friendly, we desisted. She flew at our late attacker and, after a sharp little fight, sent her down in flames to the sea. Several small craft made for the spot, but the enemy aeroplane disappeared.

Almost immediately afterward, down came our own machine close to the spot, and it sank in a couple of minutes. One of the mine-sweepers near by fortunately saved the pilot and observer, and they were none the worse for their cold bath. They turned out to be Flight Lieutenant Graham and Flight Sub-Lieutenant Ince of the Royal Naval Air Service.

After losing a machine, the Germans desisted from any further bombing. We waited again in the West Deep, expecting the tug *Conqueror* and a smaller vessel, the *Goole X*, to make an attempt to tow the *Southgarth* off, but they were so long approaching her that I signalled to the Commodore on the *Attentive* asking his permission to attempt to save the ship. He signalled back to me, "Certainly," and afterward signalled, "*Viking* take charge of salvage operations."

A boat was lowered from the *Attentive* and an attempt was made to board the *Southgarth*, but in the rough sea and strong tide this boat was carried away toward the Belgian coast, and I ordered H.M.S. *Syren* to stand toward her and tow her back, with a view to another attempt being made to board the vessel.

Eventually the boat reached her, and some of the *Attentive's* men and a few of the *Southgarth's* crew were able to get on board. The *Viking* approached the *Southgarth* and discharged large quantities of oil near her, in order to assist the boat. The weather now moderated again, and at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon I put my ship alongside and made fast with every available hawser.

In addition to my own hawsers, the *Attentive* men on board the *Southgarth*, directed by the master of the ship, passed us several large hawsers from the *Southgarth* herself, which were secured so as to hold the *Viking* alongside. When we had secured and equalised the hawsers from my ship to the *Southgarth*, I went ahead at the top of high water and, to my great joy, at last got the *Southgarth* to move. Once we had got into the West Deep, two tugs approached, and one of them assisted me to tow.

We in the *Viking* were as proud as peacocks when we returned to Dunkirk with our salvaged prize, and we received a signal of congratulation from the Commdore when we anchored the steamer off Dunkirk pier, and handed her back to her crew.

As far as I was concerned, the incident was closed. Some time afterwards I heard that a claim for several thousands of pounds was being made by the master of one of the tugs for salving the *Southgarth*. I have now

received a letter asking me to be witness at the trial wherein the master of the *Conqueror* claims on the owner of the *Southgarth* for the salving of the vessel. I wonder what he will say when he sees me in the court.

The incidents that marked the second year most were, as far as the Dover Patrols were concerned, the losses due to enemy mine-laying from submarines.

In December, 1915, I exchanged the command of the *Viking* for the *Crusader*, it being a convenient arrangement for Commander Williams, the *Crusader's* skipper, as well as myself.

I had had rather more than my share of running in 1915, and as I was constantly getting migraine, Staff-Surgeon Louis Greig, our medical officer in the parent ship, recommended to our Captain (D) that I should have a rest; and since the *Crusader* had boiler troubles, and her captain wanted to get back to the patrol, we exchanged commands by agreement.

It was an unlucky change for Williams and a lucky one for me. Only a week after my successor had taken over the *Viking* she struck a mine off Boulogne and her stern was blown off. The accident took place about the end of January, 1916; the officers were at lunch and all lost their lives, with the exception of the gunner, who was on watch at the time. This was a severe blow to me, for the *Viking's* officers had had a very hard year with me and I had grown to know them as friends who counted. The tiny little wardroom had become quite dear to us, and we had met there so often to plan, discuss and work, as well as to sing and play. It was in the wardroom of the *Viking* that I first learned to fox-trot of all things, and of all places to learn in.

I was spared the sorrow of seeing the *Viking* spoilt by

a German mine, but so many have told me how the oil fuel caught fire and, spreading itself over the sea as it ran from her, flamed away horribly, with my poor dear loyal sailors dying before help could arrive.

I lost many friends that day, including a great Hercules named Stowe, who had just received the Distinguished Service Medal for his good work in my ship.

Sailors are great believers in mascots. I always carried a toy penguin at my masthead, and I think my successor had sent it away on the *Viking's* unlucky day. Poor little *Viking*! She was repaired and rebuilt, but she has never quite recovered her speed, nor her former shape. Connected with the foregoing disaster, my late coxswain, Chief Petty Officer Williamson, was in a storeroom when the mine exploded; all with him were killed outright, but Williamson was blown up the little hatch and into the sea. He sustained severe concussion of the brain but, in spite of being unconscious, he swam about for 40 minutes before being picked up; he fortunately was wearing a life-saving waistcoat to which he undoubtedly owes his life.

I took over command of the *Crusader* in January, 1916, and found a delightfully efficient ship, with keen, able officers. The first lieutenant evidently considered that my appearance would bring good luck, and observing that the *Mohawk* and *Viking* had both struck mines within a very short time after I had left them, he suggested that they should *nail me down* once I was settled on board.

The *Crusader* was one of "White's" ships, built at Cowes, like the *Mohawk*, but she was an improvement in every way, being one of the latest of the Tribals.

I may say that her ship's company were typical of

the "new navy." They were always clean and they seemed to take such a delight in putting on their uniform properly, giving no trouble, keeping guns and torpedo tubes in tip-top working order and so forth, that I concluded that the only really vile thing in the *Crusader* was myself.

Apart from striking mines, the Dover destroyers spent a good deal of time in dodging these things, and we were fairly successful. We had frequent opportunities of sinking them by rifle and gun fire, when floating mines were met with on patrol. I remember sinking forty-two in one afternoon, with the *Viking* and *Cossack*; it seemed a dreadful waste of money, but war is an expensive luxury after all.

One of my Dover destroyers—I forget whether *Viking* or *Crusader*—was one day conveying a highly-placed official across the channel; he had received a K.C.B. and a K.C.V.O. for his services. Most officers of the Dover sea-keeping flotilla considered that he ought to have been put in prison for these same services, but we didn't decide these things. He had aired his opinions very freely on the destroyer's bridge, and he certainly was a good sailor, for it was blowing very hard and he wasn't sick.

Suddenly a horned mine was sighted, bobbing and squirming like the head of one of Heath Robinson's imagination sea-serpents. The destroyer was proceeding at full speed and there was no time to stop, for we had to be at Dunkirk for other duty at a specified time. Orders were given to train and fire the foremost 4-inch gun at the mine *en passant*. The gun-layer swung the gun round, gave a few turns to the elevating wheel and fired; the shell struck the bobbing mine, and the con-

sequent explosion even shook our superior friend, the highly-placed official. He opined that it was a wonderful shot. "Well, you didn't expect him to miss it?" I replied, and then even the highly-placed official began to realise that in our poor, old Navy, people really knew their job, whilst I, delighted at the fluke, realised that the penguin on the masthead had given a lucky flap in time to hit first shot for the honour of the Navy!

The saddest of all the incidents in our Dover area was the loss of the hospital ship *Anglia*. She was mined between Dover and Folkestone; a small merchant ship, curiously enough another *Lusitania*, stood to her assistance with splendid pluck and attempted to save life. One of the Dover torpedo boats and H.M.S. *Ure* came along as well. The *Lusitania* also struck a mine, unfortunately, and sank almost at the same time as the hospital ship. The wounded and survivors of the two vessels were picked up in a frightful condition, too dreadful to dwell upon. The hospital ship was certainly not torpedoed, although her loss made one feel vindictive, to say the least of it.

The torpedoing of the *Sussex*, full of passengers, was a crime committed in our area of patrol. Lieut.-Commander Percival, in H.M.S. *Afridi*, was responsible for a fine bit of life-saving work here, for he intercepted a signal to the effect that the *Sussex* was sinking. He dashed to her position with *Afridi*, then placed his ship right alongside and rescued all he could find. Recently I met one of the survivors, an American, who told me that the way the *Afridi* was handled excited the utmost admiration and enthusiasm amongst those who waited to be taken off.

A P. & O. steamer, the *Maloja*, was mined and sunk

off Dover, simultaneously with four other vessels, in the space of only an hour, and mine-sweeping now became a very important duty in the Dover Patrol. Area after area was declared dangerous and our charts of Dover Straits were a sight for sore eyes; circles were drawn all over them with "Dangerous owing to mines"; where there were no circles, one generally found there the little symbols employed by navigators to denote wrecks. From the Thames entrance to Beachy Head, the whole traffic had to be marshalled into "lanes," which were marked by buoys and wreck-marking vessels, whilst trawlers were employed all along the route to guide vessels passing up and down channel. The traffic routes were patrolled by destroyers, and very few losses were experienced from torpedoing, for the enemy confined their offensive operations to mine-laying, for the most part.

The mine-sweeping flotilla increased to a great number of vessels. They swept at all states of the tide, except where areas were known to be dangerous.

Our loyal wit, the author of "Nubian Nonsense," included the following verse in his poem, "The Laws of Patrolling."

"When you are warned off a spot that is dangerous,
And all traffic from there's being kept,
If you want to go through it, don't panic,
It's the only place round that's been swept."

He very pithily expresses the situation for 1916, as far as the destroyer officers' sentiments were concerned.

The Germans were very clever in their placing of the mines, but under Admiral Bacon's direction, a traffic route organisation was perfected, which succeeded so admirably that, after a comparatively short time,

navigation in our part of the channel was almost quite safe for merchant vessels and other ships making the passage, provided they stuck to the traffic routes prescribed, and complied with the orders issued regarding the hours before and after high water, between which navigation was authorised.

As Admiral Bacon said in his despatch of May 29th, 1916:—

“The same factors that impeded offensive action, owing to gales of wind and bad weather on the Belgian coast, facilitated the work of the enemy in laying mines and in attacking our commerce in the narrow waters of Dover Straits, since it assisted them to elude our patrols of protective vessels.”

The following extract from the same despatch is worth reading, and what we destroyer folk were most proud of was the paragraph that stated that not one single soldier's life was lost when crossing the channel hereabouts:

“The services of the Dover Patrol can be best appreciated from the following facts:—

“Over 21,000 merchant ships, apart from men-of-war and auxiliaries, have passed through this patrol in the last six months. Of these twenty-one have been lost or have been seriously damaged by the enemy. The losses in merchant vessels, therefore, have been less than one per thousand. On the other hand, to effect this very considerable security to our merchant shipping I regret that over 4 per cent. of our patrol vessels have been sunk and the lives of 77 officers and men lost to the nation. No figures could emphasize more thoroughly the sacrifice made by the *personnel* of the Patrol and the relative immunity ensured to the commerce of their country.

“ Besides the foregoing the Patrol assists in the protection of the flank of all the sea transport to and from our Army in France. The number of vessels that have passed and also of the troops that have been carried are known to their Lordships, but it is well to call attention to the fact that this vast transport of troops has been so thoroughly safeguarded that not one single life has been lost during the sea passage.

The work of the destroyer flotilla throughout the winter has been incessant and arduous and thoroughly well carried out.

Certain opportunities have arisen of bombarding the enemy's positions in Belgium. On these occasions the necessary minor operations have been carried out.”

CHAPTER VIII

“ FRED KARNO’S ” NAVY AND THE BELGIAN BARRAGE

“ I take this opportunity to express my most
“ cordial thanks for the assistance which you have so
“ freely given to me in the joint operations which
“ have been carried out. Although at the present time
“ it is not possible to estimate the full effect of the
“ action which you have taken, and the results may
“ never be completely known, I am convinced that the
“ success of the attack carried out by the Armies under
“ my command on the 15th September, derived considerable assistance from your co-operation.”

Extract from letter from Commander-in-Chief of British Armies in France.

Distributed to H.M. commands and vessels concerned.

In the spring of 1916, an entirely new scheme of patrolling and offensive mine-laying was adopted by the Admiral of the Dover Patrol, and the subsequent change in our work resulted in a less strenuous summer for everybody concerned.

The number of vessels in the patrol had now swollen to such an extent, and the types of ships presented so many variations of size, shape and character, that an officer commanding one of our destroyers christened us



THE HEROINE—QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS.

"Fred Karno's Navy." The name was quite appropriate. Fred Karno, I imagine, was Admiral Bacon, and he certainly made good use of the material at his disposal; I never heard that he complained to the Admiralty that he could not compete with the situation owing to lack of material and inferior armaments; he made the best use out of what was supplied to him and certainly had the absolute confidence of his officers and men.

The epoch written about in this chapter includes the summer and autumn of 1916. It found Admiral Bacon in possession of an even more extraordinary collection of ships than his predecessor, Admiral Hood, had at his disposal in 1914.

At this time, we had light cruisers, destroyers, torpedo boats, submarines, armed trawlers, drifters, motor-boats and launches, converted yachts, mine-sweepers and mine-layers, transports and hospital ships, lighters, boarding steamers, patrol boats, rafts, colliers and oilers, monitors of at least three different types, gunboats and what not, all dependent and inter-dependent on one another, like a gigantic, floating jig-saw puzzle.

We likewise had several types of different war-vessels flying the French flag, and then we had seaplane-carriers and a collection of aeroplanes and other flying craft, with a huge steamer, in which we kept our kite balloons, to complete this strange naval assortment; and whilst I dwell on such details of our composite flotilla, it would be well to say a word about the floating population of swashbucklers who manned these divers craft.

Commencing with the Admiral himself, I will say that he was the cleverest man I have ever met and probably the hardest worker. It is fair to say that many of the

schemes he perfected never came to anything because he was not given the chance to carry them out. One great scheme, the landing on the Belgian coast, was stopped at the last moment because our army plans were altered and the military landing party was not available.

Another scheme he had, of blocking Ostend, was nipped in the bud because the soldiers asked that it should be, in order that Ostend would be available as a base port, provided our Army captured this part of the Belgian coast in 1915, as they imagined they would.

Admiral Bacon was the only man I ever feared, but fortunately, he never really found me out, and I had the honour of serving as his flag captain eventually.

His officers consisted of gunnery, torpedo and submarine officers with very expert knowledge. We had trawler skippers and deck hands from Hull, the Orkneys and Shetlands, men who in cases could hardly write their names, but as I have said elsewhere, men with the "habit of the sea." We had learned professors, holding commissions in the motor-boat section of the R.N.V.R., and we had, hand in hand with them, the rag-tag and bobtail of the new navy which sprang up during the war, side by side with the new army that so thoroughly and successfully gnawed at the heart of the Boche until he broke down and collapsed.

We had also captains of ocean liners in quite subordinate positions and we had Royal Naval Reserve officers commanding destroyers, trawlers, or sections of drifters, and commanding them finely too. The little old-world town of Dover changed during these last five years like Klondyke in the '97 rush.

Our air service people in the Dover Patrol turned out some famous aviators, who did magnificent work spot-

ting for bombardments, attacking air raiders and bombing the enemy on the Belgian coast, until his life was a perfect hell. Brigadier-General Lambe was our local air service chief, and he very firmly insisted that for air raids to be successful, they must persistently continue to attack the same targets.

As we found from our own experience, nobody cared a tinker's curse for a casual bombing raid on us, but we did care when we saw poor old Dunkirk get mercilessly bombed for fifty nights out of sixty.

With this collection of material and *personnel*, we practically moved out of Dover for the summer and autumn months. On April 23rd, a number of large mine-layers, carrying hundreds of mines and escorted by several divisions of modern destroyers from Harwich, moved over to a rendezvous off the Belgian coast, where the Dover forces met them at dawn.

Admiral Bacon and his staff were on board the *Crusader*, which ship I am glad to say the Admiral had set apart for his own use during the forthcoming operations. I was particularly glad to have this opportunity of carrying him about again, because I learnt a great deal from my chief and from his flag captain.

Having satisfied himself that all his force were assembled and that our own mine-sweepers had swept a broad channel along the lines on which the mines were to be placed, a stately Orient liner and a beautifully graceful steamer formerly belonging to the Canadian Pacific Railway, steamed with their escorts parallel to the Belgian coast, within sight of Ostend and Zeebrugge, and laid their mines without any interference from the shore batteries.

With the assistance of other mine-layers, many thou-

sands of mines were laid on a barrage which extended from the banks off Nieuport to the outer Ratel Shoal and thence to the E.N.E. ward for twenty miles or so before bending to the south and east, until it reached the shoal banks again; thus making it dangerous for enemy submarines to approach the Belgian coast ports unless they took the route close to the Dutch shore, within territorial limits.

To the northward of this mine barrage, a number of ordinary navigating buoys were placed by one of the Trinity House steamers, under the direction of Commander J. S. G. Fraser, and between these buoys and the mines laid by the large liners, a continuous line of mine nets, dangerous for craft navigating on the surface, was placed. The barrage was practically formed in a day, and from that time destroyers patrolled it. The light craft steaming up and down at 15 knots used the large monitors for rallying points, in case of attack by superior forces, and a daily sweep was carried out by six paddle-wheel steamers, who were usually guarded by a small monitor armed with one large gun.

I believe I am correct in saying that the large mine-layers did their work in the early morning of April 24th, while the mine nets were placed during the ensuing day. The weather was reasonably clear, and during the forenoon a naval review was held along the barrage to seaward. Commodore Tyrwhitt arrived on the scene about 10 a.m. with his light cruisers and a number of powerful modern destroyers from the Harwich striking force. The day turned out beautifully fine, and one experienced a thrill of pleasurable pride at the sight of this perfectly manœuvred flotilla, steaming at high speed up and down in full view of our Belgian friends ashore.

I know now, after living a little while in Ostend, that spectators who from their housetops could make out the line of grey hulls on the horizon smiled superciliously at the German soldiers whom they met on the Digue. The Belgians had by this time got to know how terribly the oppressor feared a naval attack or a landing on the coast.

A number of modern German destroyers were now assembled at Ostend and Zeebrugge and, on the first day of the barrage patrol, the division of destroyers working along the N.E. half of the mine line came into contact with the enemy. Commander G. L. D. Gibbs, who had originally commanded the *Crusader*, was in charge of three "M" class destroyers, when several enemy torpedo craft dashed at the drifters who were placing the mine nets. Before they could do any damage to the little vessels, Gibbs and his companion boats swept down on to the enemy and a short, sharp skirmish took place. The Germans took to flight, running right in under the shelter of the shore guns; our destroyers pursued them, using a small gap in the barrage to get through to the attack. We heard that the whole coast line was a blaze of flashes, for the enemy were not proposing to allow our torpedo craft to come into short range by day.

One of our vessels was hit by a small shell, which unfortunately exploded in her engine-room, putting her out of action. She was, however, towed away and subsequently docked at Dunkirk.

Captain Wigram, of the monitor *Prince Eugene*, watched this little scrap with keen delight. He told me our destroyers were splendid. Gibb's three vessels were as already stated, "M" class, armed with three 4-inch guns and two pairs of 21-inch torpedo tubes. These

vessels were much superior to the Tribals, but although their guns were better and more modern, they had a shorter range than those which the larger of the Dover boats were armed with, on account of the low elevation possible with the "M" boats' guns.

The patrol of the Belgian coast barrage was continued for more than six months. There were, of course, occasions when, owing to bad weather, it could not be maintained. It was not always kept up throughout the night, but since the hours of darkness were very short during these six months, it is doubtful whether the enemy ever molested the barrage.

Of the total Belgian coast watching period, we found it impossible to maintain the patrol on about 17% of the days, which is not a very large proportion when one considers that the meteorological conditions of the Belgian coast are very similar to those of the English shore. Taking it all round, we had a very pleasant summer. The night work was chilly, but the days were usually mild enough to make life enjoyable. The Germans afforded us plenty of amusement by their promiscuous shelling, occasional "dot and carry one" attacks by destroyers if they happened to come across us in very inferior numbers, and we also had a moderate amount of excitement from the air.

The enemy flying machines had by this time learnt to appreciate that destroyers were difficult to hit, and they gave up molesting us, although the slow moving monitors afforded them a more tempting bait, which they occasionally bit at.

Sunday afternoon was the favourite time for the aeroplanes to drop their bombs, especially on ships in harbour. There was a good deal of sense in this, for

Sunday was Sunday to us, even in war, and those who worked their hardest during the week, were apt to relax a bit on the Sabbath.

One beautiful Sunday, I brought General Sir William Robertson over to Dunkirk, and berthed my ship alongside the monitor *Marshal Soult*. When the General had landed, accompanied by Admiral Bacon, I had lunch with Captain Paton on board his monitor. After lunch I stood on the gangway of the *Marshal Soult* for a few seconds, wondering whether I should go and see my friends on the other monitors there. I reflected, however, that being Sunday afternoon, those who had no duties would either be getting some exercise, or if they were too tired, "taking a stretch off the land."

I saw an aeroplane appearing and disappearing in the rather low-lying clouds, and, never dreaming that it was a Hun, stepped on board my vessel and went down to my cabin. I had no sooner gone below than I heard some heavy banging, which I took to be the breaking of the wire hawsers which secured us to the monitor. It was low tide, and any destroyer coming into the harbour at speed would easily have caused the hawsers to carry away. I ran up on deck to set things right when, to my dismay, I realised that a line of bombs had been dropped, some of which had reached their mark.

The first bomb dropped alongside the *Crusader*, exploded and did some insignificant damage to us. The next one hit the *Marshal Soult* on her thick steel deck, which was bomb-proof, and this unfortunately exploded just where I had been standing. It killed five men and wounded many others. Most of the casualties occurred to my ship's company, who had been out on to the sands near Dunkirk to collect cockles, of which

they were very fond. This bomb had exploded right among the cockle party. The deck of the monitor was in a frightful mess of mangled bodies. We did what we could for the wounded, one of whom shook his fist at the departing aeroplane and exclaimed, "We will get you yet." He certainly was a true prophet, for later that afternoon I heard this same aeroplane had been chased down and destroyed by Flight Sub-Lieutenant Goble, who brought the enemy machine to action and sent it in flames crashing down to its own aerodrome.

Another of the bombs from this machine struck the *Marshal Soult* on one of her bulges, where it exploded, tearing a big hole. The fourth and fifth bombs fell on to the quay, amongst a crowd of motor transport drivers and French soldiers, but, wonderful to relate, only three or four were injured.

It took us but a couple of days to settle down to the Belgian barrage patrol routine. We kept the regular patrol from dawn till dusk, and occasionally we would be called in to our anchorage off Dunkirk at odd times, in order to tempt German above-water craft out. At the end of April it was light enough to work from 4 a.m. until 8 p.m., which meant 16 hours daily on the patrol line proper; add to this the time we took from our anchorage to the north-east end of the outer Ratel Shoal, a matter of 15 miles, and the time returning in the evening, and it will be seen that the monitors were forced to be under weigh daily for 20 hours out of the 24. The destroyers often shortened the time down to about 18 hours, on account of their speed; in the long run, however, there was nothing much to choose, because we made occasional night reconnaissances with destroyers, which equalled up the average of hours under weigh.

We got so used to the sight of the daily barrage procession, which usually consisted of some large monitors creeping to the north-eastward, accompanied by a small anti-submarine escort of two or three thirty-knotters; a little distance off, the graceful grey shapes of the "Dover surf deer" sped out to scout ahead of the heavier craft, while the long, rather straggling line of little drifters puffed and snorted along on their way to tend the mine-nets; the mine-sweepers, in three pairs, swept ahead of the weird flotilla, with their attendant little monitors armed with their long-range guns. These small monitors were not much use for bombarding, this work being better carried out by the large 12-inch and 15-inch vessels, which have already been described, but the little monitors helped us very much in defending the long line of auxiliary craft which was always employed on the barrage line, repairing the mine-nets, weighing buoys, and carrying out the manifold duties for which they were sent out.

Once the patrolling flotilla was established on the barrage line, every opportunity was taken of doing a friendly shoot, but it must always be remembered that our forces were not, like the Huns, able to plaster towns the size of Ostend say with large shells; we had certain specified targets which boiled down to known gun positions and the harbour works, and we had to remember that we had friends in Ostend. The greater part of the time spent on the barrage reduced itself to dull patrol work.

The Dover family were certainly a happy lot, and the most junior lieutenant in command would not hesitate to send a cheeky signal to one of the monitor captains if an opportunity were given him.

The senior officers of destroyers invariably took a delight in passing close to the slow going monitors and hoisting such signals as "Course W.S.W. speed 25 knots." If the patrol was returning, this meant that we got back to our anchorage some hours before the monitors, and it used invariably to bring forth a rude signal, for the monitor captains were our seniors.

Captain Collard, commanding *Lord Clive*, in particular, took it all very quietly and one day when I passed him, knowing he was about to proceed on leave, I wished him a good time. He replied by semaphore, "I am going to the Zoo for my leave and I propose to spend my time watching the tortoises crawl." I think Collard had thought of the only creature that moved more slowly than a monitor.

As the season progressed, the monitors, from various causes, began to lose speed, or rather to go more slowly, for their customary sluggish movement forward could hardly be called "speed." The *Marshal Soult* at one time was not capable of doing more than four knots, and on another occasion the *Prince Rupert* and *Prince Eugene* were caught in a westerly gale against which they could make no progress whatever. Their captains wisely anchored and, their holding gear being good, they were able to ride out the storm with the assistance of their engines, which they constantly kept going. To the destroyers who stood by them, it looked at one time as though the *Prince Rupert* and *Prince Eugene* would be carried stern first up the river Scheldt.

The Admiral continued to use the *Crusader* whenever he went afloat, which was very often this year, for not only was our flag officer constantly on the patrol line, but he spent a great deal of time away from Dover, mount-

ing heavy naval ordnance for straffing purposes, in various shore gun emplacements, as will be seen a little later.

On account of the use made of the *Crusader* by Admiral Bacon, she came to be known as the "taxi-cab." A destroyer's accommodation and messing arrangements are hardly suitable for a Vice-Admiral, and our chief generally slept on board the monitor *Marshal Soult*; he and his staff usually had their meals there also, and in consequence of this the *Soult* was christened the "restaurant."

Early one morning I rather impudently signalled to Captain Paton, whilst passing him in the *Crusader*, "Taxicab to restaurant, submit, good-morning. I can't see any Huns." The reply came back immediately, "From *Marshal Soult* to taxicab. Go away. I didn't blow the whistle."

On another occasion, when the *Crusader*, flying the Admiral's flag, was dashing by the *Prince Rupert*, the Admiral had gone down to the chart room to get some breakfast, and very wrongly I made the following signal, "What speed are you doing?" The reply came back, "5.8 knots"; to which I made the further reply, "Put on another shovelful."

Captain Reinold, of the *Prince Rupert*, knew perfectly well that the Vice-Admiral would not descend to such childish frivolity, and he shook his great fist at me, perched up in his position under the monitor's tripod mast; I knew there would be a rough and tumble the next time that we met.

All this variety of patrol developed in us a sort of "rat-catcher" wit, and although the great amount of sea time that we did prevented us from studying the scientific side of our profession, and becoming conversant with the technique of the new types of vessels, we

certainly got into the habit of using our craft to the greatest advantage, confident that behind us the best brains of the Navy were perfecting inventions, plans and schemes for helping us, who, as it were, constantly held the front line trenches.

New-comers generally made a few blunders to begin with, although there were exceptions. In wireless signalling one could almost tell by the signal the new hand from the old fox. For instance, we received from a certain destroyer a wireless signal as follows—"Am sinking. German mine." The gentleman in question was merely firing with rifles at a German mine, and when his would-be rescuers arrived and found him doing so, he was quite hurt because they turned their searchlights on to him and signalled in unison, "B.F., B.F., B.F."

Our poet, Lieut.-Commander Hallett, includes this incident in his "Laws of Patrolling," as follows:—

"When you see a horned object that's floating,
And you've got all your rifles in line,
Please don't make a wireless signal
Am sinking, full stop, German mine."

"If you sink it or burst it, just say so,
That certainly cannot do harm,
But to make the above stupid signal,
Causes panic and useless alarm."

Commander H. G. L. Oliphant, of the *Amazon*, was one of the first Dover vessel commanders to fight a destroyer action. Returning after the patrol had withdrawn from the eastern extreme of the barrage, he came across a number of enemy destroyers, stopped and lined up ready for him. H.O. was delighted and he sped into action against them. The enemy fired a number of salvos, which were carefully controlled, without, however, inflicting any damage on our own destroyers. As

Oliphant said afterwards, " Their firing was so magnificent that they did not get a hit." He did not mean this sarcastically, for the enemy salvoes always fell very close, but were either just short or just over their target. The calibration of their guns had certainly been well carried out. Nevertheless, the Tribals never brought them to close action, for when it was seen that our T.B.D.'s meant close fighting, the enemy, working a smoke screen, withdrew inshore again and could not be followed without Oliphant's squadron crossing the mined-nets.

The enemy destroyers carried three 4.1-inch low trajectory guns, which were vastly superior to the wobbly old things we had in the Tribals. This was recognised by the powers that be. However, it was pointed out to us that it did not matter since we had the monitors to fall back upon by day time; all the same, we were not particularly anxious to fall back on the monitors, and we longed for something faster and better armed, which would give us a chance at long range, since there was obviously little chance of a respectable, close, slogging match.

I happened to be in charge of three English and one French destroyer, one morning early, when we had gone well ahead of the out-coming monitor patrol. We saw smoke to the eastward and soon after encountered a large number of enemy vessels, with their infinitely superior armament. We could not possibly have put up any kind of fight against them, and the only thing to do was to bluff them and fall back. Accordingly, without attempting to run away, I fired my foremost 4-inch gun at a range of 12,000 yards, and the enemy, who had got our range, was certainly perplexed. Our guns were really only sighted up to 10,000, and a greater range

could not be put on because the guns would not elevate further. I obtained the elevation for the extra 2,000 by running my ship's company from side to side until we had got a considerable roll on the ship—then, by firing at the maximum upward roll, a large increase of range was obtained. This range was probably as great as the German destroyers could get on their 4.1-inch guns at that time, so they retreated to Ostend and Zeebrugge; for which I was exceedingly thankful—I did not think we were fast enough to have got away from them. Some days later, with a similar small division, I again encountered the German destroyers, but a minefield lay between the opposing forces, which we were both aware of, and so only a long range fight could have taken place. I was about to open fire in the previous primitive fashion when, suddenly, five very large German destroyers, steaming slowly towards us, commenced firing salvoes. They had got our range to a nicety and the shots were all straddling us. The second of my destroyers, the *Amazon*, was hit on her mast and it was obvious to me that not only were we out-matched, but outranged this time, so I turned my division away three points together; a number of salvoes fell just short when we turned, and then the enemy, seeing us apparently running away, put up their sights by 500 yards or so and their salvoes then went over; they evidently expected me to go away full speed, because several salvoes fell well beyond. Not getting any hits, they then came down about 800 or 1,000 yards and once again fell short; all very splendid in its way, but the moment they came down, I hauled down my signal to proceed at full speed, and my four little ships sped away before the Germans knew what we had done. They were unable to pursue us directly, owing to the

minefield, but approached as near as they dared; we lay comfortably out of range and counted them, made our report by wireless, and then closed as near as we could without coming again into range, turned to the westward, and straight towards five innocent looking craft in the distance; these were our mine-sweepers and one small monitor with a 7.5 gun. We led the Germans towards this nondescript flotilla and suddenly the small monitor opened fire at about 13,000 yards; she was fortunate in obtaining a hit, which upset the Hun flotilla, and we had the laugh of them for the second time. Later in the day they came again to chase my division, but by this time we had big monitors to fall back on and very nearly entrapped them. I am sorry that the big monitors did not secure any hits with their 12-inch guns, as the Germans had now become more cautious, and made a smoke screen to hide behind. Notwithstanding, we had got the only effective hit with the 7.5-inch gun, which must have done a good deal of damage on that lightly constructed German torpedo craft.

The strength of the patrol was considerably varied, for instance, on the 4th May we had the following ships on the barrage:—

Flotilla Leader	..	..	<i>Swift</i>	..	..	..	Dover
			<i>Meteor</i>	..	..	..	Harwich
			<i>Mastiff</i>	..	..	..	"
New Destroyers	..	..	<i>Minos</i>	..	..	..	"
			<i>Myngs</i>	..	..	..	"
			<i>Murray</i>	..	..	..	"
			<i>Milne</i>	..	..	..	"
"L." Class	..	..	<i>Lysander</i>	..	..	..	"
			<i>Leonidas</i>	..	..	..	"
French Destroyer	..	..	<i>Aventurier</i>	..	..	..
Dover Destroyer	..	..	<i>Zulu</i>	..	..	..	Dover
Monitors	..	..	<i>Lord Clive</i>	..	..	..
			<i>General Crauford</i>	..	..	..
Submarines (Night only)	..	..	<i>V.4</i>	..	..	..
			<i>C.34</i>	..	..	..

while on June 2nd, we had the rather obsolete light cruiser *Attentive*, and *Crusader*, *Nubian*, *Afridi*, *Cossack*, *Tartar*, *Leven*, *Crane*, *Greyhound*, and monitors *General Wolfe*, *General Crauford*, small monitor, M.27.

The effective guns of the destroyers on the first date were thirty-three 4-inch, while on the latter date we had only six 4-inch and a number of little 12-pounders. It didn't matter how much we varied the patrol, for the Germans never quite knew what force would be out.

On June 1st the *Attentive* picked up the pilot and observer of an English aeroplane after eight hours in the water. On the same date our mine-sweepers were attacked by aircraft. One of our destroyers signalled, "How many babies have you killed lately," to the aircraft. A faint reply came back, "Pigs! Swine! Cowards!" I am told.

On June 8th, when only the Dover destroyers were out, my ship, the *Crusader*, sighted three enemy destroyers six miles distant. They opened fire at long range, and we found that our fire was useless; though our own vessels were reached, the only damage was the mast of a destroyer splintered. Monitor M.25 was coming up astern and she soon got into action, the third round fired was very close if not a hit; M.25 fired 24 rounds altogether, but the enemy destroyers made smoke screens behind which they retired. It was noticed that the enemy always turned with the flash of the monitor's gun.

This day the large monitors again opened fire on the three German torpedo boat destroyers at 18,000 yards range, but it is unlikely that any hits were obtained, for the target vessels were only occasionally visible through their smoke screen.



THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS WITH THE EARL
OF ATHLONE AND ADMIRAL BACON ON BOARD
ONE OF THE DOVER DESTROYERS.

At 10.30 a.m. enemy vessels appeared in force, and steamed up and down parallel to our old-fashioned division of Tribals, but keeping well back from the barrage and out of the monitors' range. The Admiral came out in a thirty-knotter, transferred to the *Crusader*, and took charge. I think this was merely a return naval review by the Huns, but there was no real fight that day. Unfortunately, when the *Lord Clive* had fired early she had a premature explosion, and I regret to say several pieces of shell struck the French destroyer *Aventurier*, wounding several men.

On July 15th, when the drifters were out replacing broken sections of mine nets, they found the dead body of a German in naval uniform, which came up when hauling in—an added piece of evidence that the mine-nets were fulfilling their functions. This evidence was pleasing because we destroyer people had little faith in English mines of any kind. We picked up more German naval men's bodies on the 19th, near the net line.

On the 18th July, two divisions of five enemy destroyers of modern type were engaged by *Cleopatra*, a Harwich light cruiser and the *Prince Eugene*, but no evidence was forthcoming as to damage inflicted, although the *Eugene* appeared to hit once, with a 12-inch shell.

The Germans were now beginning to make more use of their destroyers, and, as far as we could make out they kept about 15 modern torpedo-boat destroyers at their Belgian coast bases, together with some vessels of a smaller type, including the little "A" boats, which were not of much account; whenever these latter came into action they appear to have met with disaster.

One night a torpedo craft attack was made upon the little French patrol boats which guarded the approaches to Dunkirk Roads from the eastward. After a spirited little fight, when a great number of rounds were fired at the French boats by the enemy, an opportunity presented itself to one of our allied friends to let go a torpedo; this he did, at very close range, and his target vessel blew up. I believe she was a torpedo boat of the "T" Class.

The French destroyers working with us this year were the *Francis Garnier*, *Aventurier* and *Intrepide*.

They were all useful for the knock-about work on the Belgian coast, but, like our own earlier type vessels, their armaments were not sufficiently modern to be useful in anything but close fighting, which, as I said before, was denied to us this year, except for the encounter between the small French patrol boats and the small force of German light torpedo craft.

Much as I dislike the Germans, I must say they did not waste their ships in useless attacks, but kept them as a force in being, ready to strike at our shipping in the Downs, to bombard Dunkirk or to make those occasional "tip and run" raids with which we later became familiar.

It was always a wonder to us that a destroyer attack was never made on the shipping in the Downs, but the presence of the Dover vessels in the vicinity of Dunkirk undoubtedly kept this from taking place. A captured German officer explained a good deal about the German destroyer tactics. He said that the reason they so seldom risked their ships in night fighting or action at close range was because they dare not have them in-

jured; the only facilities for repairing torpedo craft were at Bruges, and even there extensive damage to torpedo craft was very difficult to make good.

As far as comparison went, the "G's," "S's" and "V's," or later classes of German destroyers, carried three 4.1-inch guns and six torpedo tubes; this armament compared to our poor old Tribals, with two guns and two old-fashioned tubes, put our vessels rather to shame, and we cannot lay claim to damaging any of the enemy boats considerably with the Dover destroyers until our flotilla was strengthened with later pattern craft.

Whether the Belgian coast mine barrage was responsible for the destruction of many German submarines, it is difficult to say. The evidence is strong enough in support of its efficiency, for one may fairly assume that a submarine has been destroyed when a huge explosion takes place, after which the body of a uniformed German sailor is picked up, and when on searching the body, one finds a pass made out in German to go ashore at Bruges. The evidence is circumstantial enough to be accepted in favour of a "U" boat's destruction. This sort of thing happened several times, but at the same time, mines exploded for other reasons, and if every explosion reported meant a submarine downed, we should have sunk all the German submarines several times over.

In 1916 enemy submarines did not make much use of the Dover Straits, but went north about to do their dirty work.

As far as mines were concerned, the Germans were much ahead of us at this time; their mines were really

dangerous, while ours, whatever their merits when in position, possessed the great fault that they broke adrift too easily and were often to be found drifting on the surface, fortunately innocuous. We did not seem to have appreciated the difficulties of keeping mines moored in the strong tides and rough seas of Dover Straits and the Belgian coast. Later on, our mines became just as dangerous as the Germans'.

The Belgian barrage patrol continued until the end of October, after which the greater part of the destroyers were withdrawn to patrol Dover Straits during the long hours of winter darkness, when submarines and above water craft had a better chance of stealing close to our own coast. We also had by now perfected our barrage from the Goodwin Sands to the Snouw Bank with mines and mine-nets, which were more efficient than those used earlier on.

Our good-bye to Dunkirk and the Belgian barrage was always rather a sad one for it took us further from the fighting, and we no longer could hear the guns of the opposing armies, which kept the warlike instinct alive in us; the Belgian barrage was infinitely more interesting with its occasional excitements, bombardments and skirmishes, than the long night patrols off Dover in heavy weather, when sheets of icy spray used to break over our bridges and decks and froze us until our fighting instincts were numbed and our only pleasure consisted in hot brews of cocoa and tea to keep body and soul together.

November saw us all on the Dover patrol line again, how we hated it! Fortunately the destroyer captains continued as a band of brothers who pardoned one

another's shortcomings and realised that the biggest bounce made the best man.

The following verses from the "Laws of Patrolling" will give a little colour to the end of this chapter, and will also give a few glimpses of our winter work. We had our fun on the Belgian coast to look back upon, and another Belgian coast to look forward to, for those who survived the winter.

"Now these are the laws of patrolling,
And novices please take the hint,
If you carry them out you'll do better
Than by doing what's already in print.

If the boat you relieve on patrol line
Is ordered an escort at noon,
Don't slip from your buoy at eleven,
You'll only get out there too soon.

If you find yourself close to the entrance
In fog or in mist or in rain,
Take permission to enter as granted,
Get inside where the guns cannot train.

When you're sent down to Folkstone for escort,
And a transport is leaving at eight,
It's quite normal to be there at midnight,
For a transport will always be late.

When you get to a buoy from patrol line,
And it's blowing and pouring with rain,
Don't be silly and put on two bridles,
Or you'll soon have to go out again.

When a submarine's sighted off Beachy,
And Destroyers are ordered to slip,
Don't be in too much of a hurry,
'Twill be cancelled, just take my tip.

Or perhaps to Boulogne for the leave boat,
You're sent to be there at night fall,
Don't be angry or rattled at daylight
When you're told the boat won't leave at all.

If a trawler won't answer the challenge,
Don't sink him before you ask why,
For he's perfectly certain to tell you
That's he's never been told the reply.

If you're tired of patrolling and escort
And you're fed to the teeth with your work
Just pray for a refit or stand off,
Or a fortnight detached at Dunkirk."

"NUBIAN NONSENSE."

CHAPTER IX

A THIRD WINTER AND H.M.S. " BROKE "

ON October 27th, 1916, a German destroyer flotilla from the Flanders coast made a night raid on the Dover Strait. My ship was refitting at Portsmouth and unfortunately missed this stunt, and so I cannot describe it as an eye-witness. The enemy sank the poor little 20 years old *Flirt* under the following circumstances:—

On arriving in the Dover Strait the enemy attacked the drifters who were attending the mine nets and sank one or two of them. The *Flirt* arrived on the scene after the enemy destroyers had finished pounding the little fishing craft, which they had every right to do for the drifters were to all intents and purposes men-of-war.

Finding some of the drifters' crews swimming about in the sea, the *Flirt* lowered a boat, which attempted to save life. While the boat with the first lieutenant was pulling about, looking for the drifters' crews, the German destroyers came back and riddled the *Flirt* with shell until she finally sank. The enemy flotilla evidently expected to cut off the transports which they imagined were carrying troops between Folkestone and Boulogne. Some of their destroyers came across the troop transport *Queen*, which they fired on heavily until she was in a sinking condition. No transports were being run across at night, which was fortunate for us.

The destroyers in Dover, under the *Amazon* (Commander Harry Oliphant), dashed out of harbour and attacked the enemy, but neither side did much damage; there were some casualties on board the *Amazon*, who was struck once or twice, while some light damage was done to one of the other Tribals.

The enemy made off, but coming across the *Nubian*, which had separated from the other torpedo craft, the Germans hotly engaged her. The *Nubian* attempted to ram one of the enemy destroyers, but unfortunately was hit with a torpedo before she brought off this coup. She did not, however, sink, for her commander ran her ashore under the South Foreland, from which position she was salved later in the war.

We had nothing to crow about on account of this raid, for the enemy got off lightly. It was one of those cases when the luck was with the Germans.

It was unfortunate that the *Nubian* did not bring off her ramming, as had she struck and sunk an enemy destroyer, it would have made up for the loss of the *Queen* and the *Flirt*.

After this incident, the Dover Patrol was strengthened by the addition of more modern destroyers permanently, and the Straits patrol was re-organised to compete with raids of this kind.

A rather grim humour is attached to the story of the *Flirt's* boat, which contained the only survivors of the unfortunate little ship. After the *Flirt* had been sunk, the boat's crew pulled out, looking in vain for their shipmates, and whilst so engaged, an English destroyer came speeding along and dropped a depth charge near them, mistaking the boat for a submarine in the darkness. This fairly shook them up, but their adventures

were not all over, for an enemy submarine on the surface had a look at them and, I understand, also took them for a submarine and dived to escape destruction.

We now adopted what was known as the dark night patrol. During the ten days or a fortnight of each month when there was no moon, the Dover destroyers were employed in two divisions to patrol the Straits with a view to competing with these destroyer raids.

The concentration of destroyers meant better protection against above water craft, but a lesser degree of vigilance against submarines. There was, of course, an outcry because enemy destroyers had been allowed to penetrate the Channel. I don't think anybody in Dover was ever very rattled on account of newspaper outcries; at the same time it would have been a very good thing if those who were doing the patrol work and facing the third winter, with its attendant strain and hardship, had been allowed to point out what they had to contend with, and to display their rotten collection of craft for comparison with the splendid vessels in other Admiral's commands. The eastern patrol division, which worked near the tail of the Ruytingen Shoal, was only a short two hours' run from Ostend, and the crews of their ships were called upon to exercise the greatest degree of vigilance and readiness, often for ten nights on end in the winter. By day they were employed on anti-submarine patrol work, when they were not oiling, or carrying officials across who were too proud to go over on troop transports.

While I take off my hat to the efficient, patient, highly-trained body of officers and men who proudly served in the Grand Fleet, they had a gentleman's life compared to the Dover lot. My own South Polar train-

ing, which took me four voyages into the Antarctic seas, certainly had fitted me for work such as we were called upon to face on our patrol; I had my sleeping bag, into which I could crawl on the bridge, and a complete set of most beautiful warm Antarctic under-clothing, which defied competition. But there were many in the Dover service who had been more carefully and gently brought up, and these people, I consider, put up no end of a good show.

I felt a personal grievance against the loss of the *Flirt*; she had an R.N.R. Lieut.-Commander as captain and an R.N.R. first lieutenant, two of the nicest, cheeriest beings one could possibly wish to see, and I had been once or twice on board for some purpose or other. There was nothing beautiful about the *Flirt*, except, perhaps, her name; she was just a dirty, pre-war type of destroyer of that kind which only burns coal and which seems to make a point of collecting cinders from her funnels on her bridge, in her boats, and in every conceivable corner of her much congested deck space. Down below, in her wardroom, especially in winter, there was not room to swing a cat, for the bunks all round were crowded with clothes, books and other gear, to permit chair room for the officers to take their meals or sit at their table. There was nothing in their surroundings to make these people cheerful, but no one could accuse them of being anything else. Forward, on the messdeck, the accommodation was even worse, but no one ever heard a moan; complaint was unknown to these men. The *Flirt* was a happy ship, but why she was designated ship, or what her over-worked, uncomfortable crew had to make them happy about, God only knows. There is no disputing the fact, however that she was

once His Majesty's Ship and she was happy, and what was more, after twenty years of bumping and buffeting about, she met a greatly superior force of the enemy and took them on, bravely firing her guns until she sank, for the honour of her country. Poor little *Flirt*!

When we, in the *Crusader*, came back from our refit at Portsmouth, the day after this incident, we heard these things, and I for one made up my mind that I would try and pay off this account. I am glad to say I did so, a few months later on.

We in Dover knew how hard it was to satisfy all demands, but this raid resulted in our getting some far more powerful destroyers, and a few days afterwards I received an appointment to command a destroyer, or rather flotilla leader, that was perfectly fitted for night fighting. She fairly bristled with guns.

I was sent up to Cammell Laird's yard to run the trials of H.M.S. *Seymour* and then, directly she was ready, to hand her over to the Grand Fleet. In return for her I was to obtain the battle-scarred *Broke*, which ship had been much hammered by the German warships in the Jutland Battle six months before.

The *Broke* was to work with her sister vessels the *Botha* and *Faulknor*, in the Dover Strait. Each of these vessels carried six 4-inch guns and four 21-inch torpedo tubes, a vast improvement on the armament of our now very obsolete Tribals.

I did not waste much time in getting clear of the *Seymour*, much as I would have liked to retain this beautiful, modern ship. I proceeded from Liverpool up the west coast of Scotland and thence to Scapa Flow, and from here, after getting instructions, I sped down to Invergordon, where I saw "my future home," a power-

ful, and fairly new ship, but a dirty contrast to the beautiful, oil-burning ship I had got from Cammel Laird's.

In half a day I had turned over my crew, self and baggage, from the *Seymour* to the *Broke*. My old friend, Captain Gladstone, who had served in the Dover Patrol, relieved me in the *Seymour*, and then I took my new command at 20 knots down the east coast through the war channel to Lowestoft, where I had been ordered to stop to obtain my route instructions for the latter part of my voyage. This was the only glimpse I had of the North Sea during the war.

Very proudly I berthed the *Broke* alongside the eastern arm at Dover. My envious confrères flocked on board to see and decide before airing their opinions as to her fighting qualities. I had taken with me a few satellites from the *Crusader*, including the weather-beaten Petty Officer Smith, who had already won the D.S.M., when yeoman of signals to Admiral Hood. Smith was the coolest hand I ever met, and he knew all about everything concerning the Dover Patrol, its disposition and signals. Smith, fortunately, was human, and he had two faults, he could not read morse or semaphore as well as other signalmen. Sometimes I got very impatient with him for this—not that it mattered to Smith.

Of all things that surprised the Dover destroyer people most on board the *Broke*, was that we carried ten marines. Marines in a destroyer! They had never heard of such a thing.

The *Broke* was certainly a comfortable ship, beautiful in a seaway, with splendid bridge accommodation, although, like the poor little *Flirt*, she had a habit of covering herself with cinders. She was originally built for the Chilian Navy, and had beautiful accommodation

for the captain and "rotten quarters" for everyone else. She was "requisitioned before delivery" from the Chilian Government, under the 1914 Emergency War Programme, when her name was changed from *Almirante Goni*. Her speed was 29 knots and her principal fuel was coal, but we had a method of squirting oil into her furnaces that gave us an extra turn of speed if required.

One remarkable feature about this ship was the disposition of her gun armament. We could fire four 4-inch guns right ahead.

I hardly expected Admiral Bacon to take on the *Broke* as his taxi-cab, but as a matter of fact he did, when there were any operations afoot, and also when the "Knuts" crossed over, if they were "Knuts" he fancied.

It was a great change for the destroyer commanders to move into the flotilla leaders, of which we secured four in the Dover Patrol in the third year of the war, viz., the *Swift*, *Broke*, *Botha* and *Faulknor*. Our destroyer patrol on January 1st, 1917, consisted of the following vessels:—

<i>Attentive</i>	<i>Greyhound</i>	<i>Unity</i>	
<i>Active</i>	<i>Flirt</i>	<i>Porpoise</i>	
<i>Faulkner</i>	<i>Mermaid</i>	<i>Ambuscade</i>	
<i>Swift</i>	<i>Leven</i>	<i>Victor</i>	
<i>Broke</i>	<i>Fawn</i>	<i>Paragon</i>	
<i>Afridi</i>	<i>Kangaroo</i>	P.34	} Patrol Boats
<i>Amazon</i>	<i>Syren</i>	P.17	
<i>Ghurka</i>	<i>Myrmidon</i>	P.11—	
<i>Viking</i>	<i>Gipsy</i>	P.12—	
<i>Crusader</i>	<i>Racehorse</i>	P.19—	
<i>Nubian</i>	<i>Crane</i>	P.21—	
<i>Zulu</i>	<i>Falcon</i>	P.24—	
<i>Cossack</i>	<i>T.B.4</i>	M.24—	} Small Monitors
<i>Tartar</i>	<i>T.B.15</i>	M.25	
<i>Mohawk</i>	<i>T.B.24</i>	M.26	
<i>Saracen</i>	<i>Lapwing</i>	M.27—	
<i>Ure</i>	<i>Phoenix</i>		

The younger officers who had originally commanded the thirty-knotters had moved up into the Tribals, and the Tribal commanders had moved into "M" boats or flotilla leaders.

I am afraid I always was, and always shall be, one of those who really hate the German and all his works. I did not always agree with my confrères in the patrol, and I certainly fell out for a moment with one of them who, on first visiting my new command, stated as his opinion that what we wanted was Prussianism in England. I told him that I was out to fight for that democratic freedom that we in old England had been accustomed to, and I must say I brought up my men in the *Broke* to realise that, for however many winters the war continued, we must go on until the Germans were smashed, and until the Kaiser no longer controlled the destinies of a huge nation.

To-day, when the history of the war is more or less public knowledge, one is able to form a pretty good opinion of the general characteristics of the belligerent nations. To-day, in Belgium, the name "German" is a by-word for all that is vile, for domination sought by brutality, espionage, treachery and underhand commercial tactics; no true Belgian will ever forget the Hun occupation. In this brave little country the people are disgusted with Germany, and they loathe her and all that the word "German" stands for.

At the beginning of 1917 the Germans realised that, although they were not beaten, they could get no further, also that they were held by us and our glorious, splendid allies; they must have felt when they looked into those grey, steadfast, fearless eyes, as they occasionally did when they got a handful of British prisoners, that the

game was up and that they would eventually be called upon to pay the price of outrage and atrocity.

From the moment the Germans realised that they could not win, they entirely changed towards the people of Belgium, and treated them first with strictness, then almost with friendliness.

People in Germany were beginning to mistrust the "Eat 'em alive" group headed by Von Hindenburg, Ludendorf, and the fire-eating Crown Prince, and, in order to keep up the spirits of the populace, all kinds of little stunts were undertaken for propaganda purposes. The Germans would not risk another naval battle after Jutland, for their ships would only have been sunk had they afforded us another opportunity of meeting them in sea battle; they therefore appear to have used the best of their *personnel* in submarines, on which they pinned their faith. The unemployment of their battle fleet freed the light forces, and eventually a fair number of modern torpedo craft were based on the Flanders coast. Presumably the enemy gave us credit for strengthening the Dover Patrol after the raid on October 27th.

On the 18th March, 1917, during the dark night period, some enemy destroyers crept up the Dover Strait barrage and, waiting for our patrols to approach and turn, the enemy were fortunate enough to torpedo and sink the *Paragon*, with no loss to themselves. It was a well-executed bit of work, and it proved that the enemy had not finished with the use of above-water craft in our area.

Apparently the destroyers thought that they could now enter the Dover Strait with impunity, and therefore, on the night of the 20th April, only one month later,

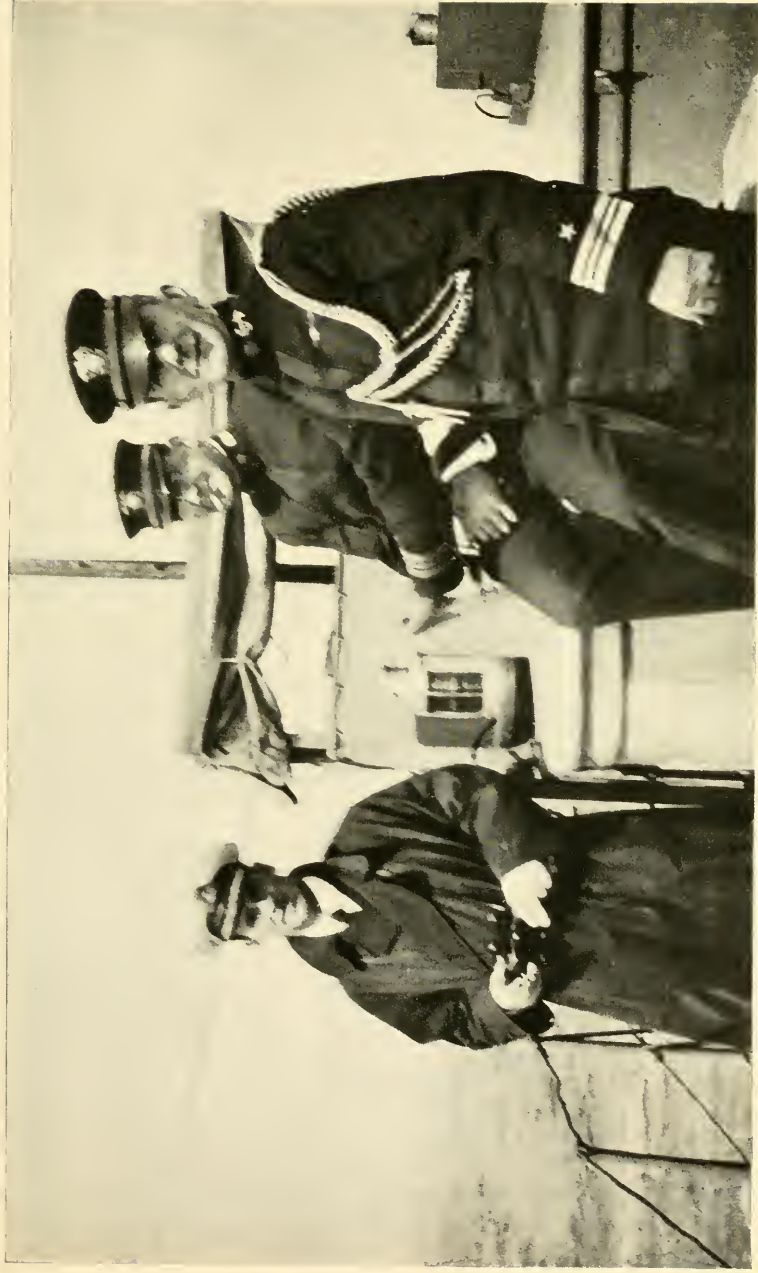
when the weather was fine but the sky overcast and there was no moon, an attack was made by a flotilla or half flotilla of large destroyers on Dover and Calais.

My ship, the *Broke*, was patrolling with H.M.S. *Swift* near the western end of the barrage.

The night was so dark and the conditions so suitable for an attack, that I had passed the word round that the Germans would probably attempt to bombard Dover, in order to please their local "Daily Mail." This would be a fairly easy thing to do if they fired a few rounds and then left at full speed; the odds were on their getting away in the darkness. But in spite of these excellently favourable conditions, what took place subsequently proved to be quite a bold piece of work.

As far as we have been able to make out, the enemy approached at moderate speed with six destroyers of a very modern type and, when about three miles from Dover, they carried out a very rapid bombardment. We in the *Broke* followed the *Swift* towards the gun flashes at full speed but, not coming across the enemy vessels, we returned to the eastern end of our patrol, hoping to prevent these destroyers from damaging the shipping in the Downs. The German vessels actually passed close to the eastward of the Goodwin Sands without being seen, and then, after steaming some little time to the north-eastward, they turned and came back again, evidently expecting to be joined by another lot of their destroyers. These, we subsequently learned, had bombarded Calais.

Suddenly the Dover raiders were sighted by the *Swift* and ourselves in a position about seven miles east of Dover. The vessels were steaming quickly to the eastward in line ahead; they immediately opened fire, which



AMERICAN STAFF OFFICERS WITH COMMANDER EVANS ON BOARD M.L.-181 GOING OUT TO MEET
THE FIRST 6 U.S. DESTROYERS OFF QUEENSTOWN.

the *Swift* returned, firing her three guns as she passed down the line at full speed. Nothing could have suited us better than the situation on meeting, for although the comparison of numbers and armaments left us at a great disadvantage, the *Broke's* right-ahead fire of four 4-inch under easy control from the bridge, was more than equal to the broadside of any single German destroyer.

Both ships converged towards the enemy, after the first exchange of rounds between our leader and the Germans, and then, to close them quickly, I altered course out of the wake of the *Swift* for a few seconds and held my fire until the director sights on the bridge came on for firing the port foremost torpedo. I saw the first lieutenant, Despard, making ready to fire at the second ship in the line. He was very deliberate about his shot, and after he had given the order to fire the port foremost torpedo, I held on for a few seconds in order to give the torpedo a chance to clear the tube, before altering course to go right in amongst the squadron of raiders. Standing at the compass I conned the *Broke* with the intention of ramming the destroyer against which we had launched a torpedo, and before I had steadied, the controlling officer opened fire with our foremost guns with independent firing, for the range was so short. Despard was watching the torpedo he had fired speeding through the water, and quite suddenly he yelled out, "We've got her." I replied, "Got what?" and before he could answer our torpedo reached its mark, striking a destroyer which afterwards turned out to be G.85, plumb amidships. My intention had been to ram this vessel, but it was now not necessary to do so. I put my helm hard aport and swung away to starboard for a mat-

ter of seconds and then, just as I had made up my mind that it was time to turn again in order to ram the next boat following astern of the torpedoed one, my navigator, Lieut. G. V. Hickman, said quickly, "If you put the helm over now, sir, you'll get this next one all right." I put the helm hard starboard, righted it and then we watched. Those in the destroyer we intended to run down had gathered what our intention was, but for them it was too late. A cloud of smoke and sparks belched forth from their funnels, and we got a momentary whiff of this as we tore towards her; it all happened in a few seconds, and the feeling of exhilaration as we were about to strike her can never be repeated; at the moment we crashed into her port side, abreast of the after funnel, my enthusiasm overcame me and I shouted out, "That means two months' leave."

Our strong bow ground its way into the enemy vessel's flank; in the blaze of gun flashes we read her name, G.42, as her bow swung round towards us, while we carried her bodily away on our ram.

The *Broke*, steaming at 27 knots, whirled this destroyer practically on her beam ends, so that she could not fire. It must have been a dreadful moment for those on board. One of her torpedo tubes stuck into our side and was wrenched right off its mounting. Our guns, which would bear at maximum depression, were turned on to this wretched ship and we literally squirted 4-inch shell into the helpless vessel.

In fine weather we always kept three loaded rifles, with bayonets fixed, at each gun, and one at each tube and after-searchlight. Cutlasses were provided all round the upper deck, besides which revolvers were supplied to petty officers, and there were many kept loaded

on the bridge. The anti-aircraft pom-poms were also manned, and at the moment of ramming, when Lieut. Despard piped "boarders" on the forecastle, the weapons practically fell into the hands of the men who were waiting to use them.

In a few seconds after the shock of the collision had been felt, a deadly fire was poured from our fore part into the huddled mass of men who, terror-struck, were grouped about the enemy destroyer's decks. Many of them clambered up our bow and got on to the forecastle, to meet with instant death from our well-armed seamen and stokers. There was no question of the enemy boarding us with the idea of inflicting damage, they came on board to save their own lives, but in the confusion of the action, the *Broke's* men took no chances.

Midshipman Donald A. Gyles, R.N.R., who was wounded with a shell splinter, took charge on the forecastle, and organised a gun crew from the survivors of those foremost gun crews who had suffered many casualties, and thus kept the guns continually going. He also repelled the German sailors who swarmed on board from the destroyer, freely using his revolver.

Up on the bridge we had quite a merry time. According to our custom we had laid a number of loaded revolvers round the little range-finder platform on the after side of our bridge. There was nothing very much for us to do while we were steaming ahead with *G.42* on our bow. The next destroyer astern of her passed ahead of us, and the one following after passed astern. This one I attempted to torpedo by order from the bridge, but all our controls were shot away and we could get no answer from the tubes. One of these destroyers, passing us at close range, was torpedoed by order of

Mr. F. Grinney, our torpedo gunner, but the No. 1 of the tube, Leading Seaman G. Ivens, was killed immediately he had fired his torpedo, before he had the satisfaction of seeing it run true.

I do not pretend that we in the *Broke* escaped without injury during this welcome action. The German account made out that the enemy torpedoed several light cruisers and sank sundry torpedo craft, and if two super destroyers were mistaken for a flotilla of light cruisers and torpedo craft, one can excuse the Germans, because, although there were only six against us, there was a moment when we on the bridge of the *Broke* thought that quite fifteen ships were against us, in the confusion of the blaze of the fire, the choking smoke, the men's cries and the noise of exploding shells.

I must say, I thoroughly enjoyed myself, although at one time I was very frightened, for a shell from one of the German destroyers passing down our starboard side hit a box of cordite on the *Broke's* forecastle, and this, after being thrown into the air, fell on our bridge. The cordite was scattered about and on fire. The high flames lit us up so much that we were a target to the enemy vessels, and we certainly were punished severely. We had killed everything we could see on board *G.42*; her stern was sinking more and more until we finally steamed right over her, and we then made to ram another enemy vessel; this we missed, owing to our loss of speed, due to an explosion in one of the boiler rooms which cut our main steam pipes. The *Broke* was now on fire amidships as well as on the bridge, steam was escaping with a horrible noise and we were rapidly losing headway. I remember blowing up my life-saving waistcoat, which I had put on for the first time; I gave

it three good sturdy puffs, said about three words of prayer that I should be spared for my wife's sake, and then turned my attention to doing more damage to the enemy.

We in the *Broke* were heading to pursue the remaining enemy destroyers, of which we could make out one ahead and one to starboard, but they slipped away in the darkness and we could discern the *Swift* in chase. As I said before, the night was very dark, but the Germans, when they attempted to get away, were flaming from their funnels, as also was the *Swift*. After a very short interval my artificer engineer came up on to the bridge and informed me that the loss of feed water was so great that he could not steam more than half speed. He pointed out that we must eventually stop, and we therefore turned and made towards two sinking destroyers. A mile from them we passed through a great number of Germans swimming in the sea. Possibly phosphorescence was responsible for what we saw, but the swimming Germans appeared to have some calcium light fitting in the life-saving waistcoats which they wore, and this we thought made a flicker of flame in the water, to which we attributed the number of twinkling lights which could be seen in the sea all round us; these flickered and blinked like fairy lights on pantomime elves. The unfortunate Germans cried out, "Save, save," but the action was not yet finished, and though I should in all probability have returned to save what I could, I did not at that time forget the poor little *Flirt*, the recent bombardment of our undefended coast towns, the torpedoing of hospital ships, and the crime of the *Lusitania*. My first lieutenant asked me whether I would not stop then and lower boats, but I had to in-

form him that I was out to finish the fight first, before attending on midnight bathers.

I expected the enemy to return and put up another fight, and it was not long before we saw in the darkness the phosphorescent wake of an approaching destroyer. She flashed out the challenge, but we could not reply, owing to all our electric circuits having been shot away, besides which, our bridge had been gutted fairly well, for it had been hit in thirty-two places by shells, shell splinters and small stuff. Fortunately, the yeoman Smith had an electric torch; I told him to spell out "B-R-O-K-E-" which he did, and then we learnt that the destroyer was the *Swift*.

We heard them cheering in the darkness, and gave them a faint cheer back. We closed one of the two sinking destroyers, and I observed that her upper deck was aflame and that she had a big hole under the fore-castle through which fire could be seen. Some men on her cried out, "Surrender," and I shouted through the megaphone, "All right, we will pick you up," but an inconsiderate fellow on board her fired a round from the foremost 4-inch gun, which passed through our bridge, and we therefore gave it them in the neck with four rounds of our own 4-inch, three of which were hits.

Peppé, our sub-lieutenant, earlier in the action, finding that the torpedo control had been shot away, reported this and was sent off to torpedo with the starboard tube, whenever he got his chance. As I have already explained, the torpedo gunner had fired one torpedo from the starboard tube, the after one as it happened, as the foremost torpedo could not be fired, owing to a shell having struck and bent the firing lever. Peppé, the moment he saw the sinking German ship open fire as

described, let go the port after-torpedo at a 200 yards range, and we on the bridge witnessed the track of this as it sped along towards its target. The torpedo had been set to run at a six foot depth, and it hit the enemy vessel on the starboard side, near the stern. She still took some few minutes before sinking, and, unfortunately for us, we were then compelled to stop on account of such a loss of feed water that, although the engineers had attempted to use salt water in the boilers, there was a danger of burning them out. While watching this vessel sink, the navigator pointed out that it would be a toss up whether the flames reached her magazine and blew her up, or whether she sank first. Had she blown up, we might have suffered severely—we were drifting on to her and my ship would no longer steer; I accordingly sent an officer down to the engine room to explain the situation, and we managed to get a little steam on to the engines, with which we went slowly astern, and then stopped. This sternway, fortunately, was sufficient to keep us from colliding. H.M.S. *Mentor* came out from Dover and closed us; I ordered her alongside; her captain, Lieut.-Commander Landon, berthed her splendidly on my port side, and hawsers were quickly passed from one ship to the other. He started going astern and got some way on us just as the enemy vessel sank. This all took place in a very short time, and I was delighted at Landon's seamanship. He was mentioned in despatches for this piece of work.

The *Swift* now closed the other sinking destroyer—no lights were burning in her and apparently she was G.42, the one that we had rammed; some of her crew had taken to the boats and could be seen in the glare of the *Swift's* foremost searchlight, pulling desperately

towards the British vessel. All her survivors were taken on board, and from them we subsequently learned that six vessels had come out from Zeebrugge—three of them in the action appeared to be sunk by “a colossal naval force almost simultaneously.” The *Mentor* had picked up a number of prisoners, which she transferred to us in exchange for our wounded, and took these to Dover as quickly as possible. We, in the meantime, anchored to wait for dawn, when we hoped to be towed back into port. Having nothing better to do, I interrogated these prisoners, and finding one who spoke Danish, obtained a good deal of information from him. He told us that he understood that seven cruisers had attacked them, and when I informed him that we were only two large destroyers, he would scarcely believe it, and continually shook his head. He told me that the prisoners were most indignant that a ship should charge right down their line, and he said that it was most unlooked for and gave them no chance to torpedo us. We obtained from this man the number of his ship (*G.85*), which was torpedoed, and that of *G.42*, the rammed vessel. He also gave us particulars as to their crews—they apparently carried 90 men each.

The damage sustained by the *Swift* was one hit under the forecastle with a 4.1-inch shell. This exploded, killed one man and wounded four, besides making a hole in the side. Our own damage was a bent and buckled stem, two large holes, port side of the forecastle, above the water line, one shell on the forecastle which struck our own shell in the rack and exploded two; unfortunately, this caused a great number of casualties amongst the gun crews there. One shell came through the bridge from forward on the port side, and exploded

on the side of the lower bridge, killing the signalman of the watch and badly wounding the quartermaster and telegraph man. Another shell went through the star-board side wing of the fore bridge. One shell hit the port side, above the water line, and passing through the coaling bunkers exploded in the boiler room, killing all in it and carrying away the main steam pipe. Another shell abaft the after wireless house exploded on the star-board side, before the after torpedo tube there, and killed several men. The compass, wireless telegraph installation and after searchlight were all knocked out of action by small ammunition. All the electric wires and voice pipe communication were shot away, and we had a number of minor damages caused by shell fragments, presumably. The foremost funnel had a great number of holes in it—in fact it resembled a sieve as seen from the bridge. The bridge, as stated, suffered a good deal, and it is surprising to me how few casualties we had up here. I remember an interesting episode which occurred just after we had rammed *G.42*. "Our Mr. Smith," who was holding a telescope, which he always did night and day, was looking over the port side of the *Broke's* bridge on to the huddled mass of frightened men on the German destroyer's deck below him. Suddenly he skipped to the range-finder platform, took two loaded revolvers and handed them up to the first lieutenant. "Come on, sir. Here's your chance," he said, and in a few seconds Despard's tall, grim figure was to be seen emptying the contents of the two automatic pistols into the scared group of Boches. Smith was not much behind him and between the two, I am told, they got rid of sixty rounds of pistol ammunition—one hardly expects this sort of thing in modern naval warfare.

I am sorry to say we had fifty-seven casualties on the *Broke*, of which twenty-one were killed outright and one or two more died later.

While I do not pretend that our wounded in this little action suffered more or even as much as many of those that we have seen clothed in that blue hospital garb that we all know so well—those who have faced the barbarism of the German and who have borne, perhaps, the infliction of torturing gas and liquid fire—I cannot refrain from mentioning one case which is significant of the true spirit of the Navy.

When we had satisfied ourselves that no further enemy action was to be expected, I left the bridge of the *Broke* with my first lieutenant and proceeded to make a little tour of inspection to visit the wounded, and to see what damage had been done.

I came down into my cabin, which was the after dressing-station in action, and here I found many wounded sitting round my cabin table, cheerful and uncomplaining. A man apologised for bleeding all over the seat of my settee, and I quickly put his mind at rest on that subject. One of the wounded with whom I conversed was Stoker John Clasper; this man was off watch during our little scrap, but his action station, while not employed below, was to assist in loading a gun. A German shell had exploded near him, blowing men to pieces, and fragments of hot steel had torn their way into his back and hips. He must have suffered agony, but Clasper continued at his post until the action was over; he was visited by a stretcher party, but he sent them off to succor others and made his way down to my cabin to await his turn for surgical aid. Even when Helsham, our surgeon probationer, could help him,

he remarked that he was in no hurry and begged the doctor to attend to others who were in worse pain perhaps. I was told that this man could never properly recover, and a few days later, when I stood at his bedside, I met his wife, a little woman from Newcastle, who informed me with brave cheerfulness that he had been a good husband to her and that she would work for him willingly, and that to do so was going to be the pleasure of her life. This woman was typical of many who bravely gave their men to fight for the allied cause, and the man Clasper, was typical of the *Broke's* ship's company.

Often now, when there seems a rather doubtful future for the naval officer and the man trained to arms, I think, like many others, that perhaps it is not too late to break away from the navy and start a new profession; but when I think it all over, I feel I cannot tear myself away from men like these, whom it is such an honour to command. I feel that they have done so much for me and I have got so much good out of my association with them that perhaps, after all, I shall be happier remaining in the service and going where I am sent. For, whatever one hears of Bolshevism, and revolutionary talk, I can say truly that I have never found anything but generosity, pride of ship, and big-hearted willingness amongst these splendid men. I am quite confident that nothing can change the brotherhood of the seas.

Concerning this destroyer fight, in which we were so fortunate, there were, of course, the bright and the sad side.

When dawn sulkily broke, I walked round our decks, which were all slippery with blood, and found the doctor identifying the dead. When they had been collected

and reverently covered with flags, the remainder of the ship's company scrubbed down and white-washed over all the blood-splashed places, so that nothing horrid remained to hurt the eye or to remind one of this, the grim aspect of the story. Once this had been done, the injured ones cheered up splendidly, and when it became light, my sailors were all smiles, for they had got their own back once again.

Many of my ship's company had served in the *Glasgow*, when she witnessed the sinking of the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* off Valparaiso on November 1st, 1914, by the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, and they had also been present when Admiral Sturdee's squadron in the Falkland Islands battle had sunk the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg*; and yet again they paid their debts in full when the *Glasgow* sank the *Dresden* on March 14th, 1915, near Juan Fernandez Island. We certainly had a well-trained fighting ship's company, although the *Broke* had not been in action since the Jutland battle on the 31st May, 1916, nearly a year before. There is no doubt that they were men who were made of fighting stuff.

The *Broke* was towed into harbour and berthed by two large tugs from Dover. One could not help feeling a bit lumpy in the throat when the other ships' companies cheered us again and again. Not least among these cheers were those of the little drifters' crews, who made cock-a-doodle-doo's on their syrens until the din of hooting was almost deafening.

It is interesting to note that the *Broke* had been nine nights on patrol, had coaled ship twice during that period, and that on the afternoon of the 20th April, she had taken in a large amount of coal at the rate of eighty-

seven tons an hour. In spite of this her crew never considered that they were overworked, and were always full of zeal.

On counting up the prisoners taken by the *Swift* and picked up by various boats, which were sent out to search, we found we had saved 140 German officers and men. I saw them marched away from the naval pier. They were a very big lot, of good physique, with one or two exceptions. A crowd of people was waiting to see them when they landed, and everybody was quite quiet and well-behaved towards the prisoners. There was nothing cock-a-hoop about the onlookers, only one mechanic from the R.N.A.S. quite spoilt the dignity of the proceeding by yelling "Are yer 'ungry?" which he might have left unsaid. This was, of course, in the days before coupons were inflicted on us.

The German dead were buried on the 22nd April, and many of us from the destroyers attended their funeral. The Vice-Admiral sent a wreath, on which was written, "To a brave enemy." This seems to have caused a lot of adverse comment in the newspapers at that time, because it was stated that Admiral Bacon's inscription was, "To a brave and gallant enemy," which he had not written; not that it really mattered, but in those days of submarine murders one could hardly attribute the quality of gallantry to German naval men.

Our own brave dead were buried the following day when all Dover turned out to pay their last mark of respect to our fallen sailors. The funeral of the *Broke's* men and the one man killed on the *Swift*, naturally left a lasting impression on one's mind, and made one feel how hateful war was. We who had come out unscathed received a lot of decorations and rewards for our serv-

ices, but we were not unmindful of the poor relatives who had lost their nearest and dearest; their drawn cheeks, dimmed eyes and pale faces, one cannot forget. I marched alongside Captain Peck, immediately behind the coffins, and we passed through the crowded streets in slow time.

I still have my memories of that funeral; the children craning their necks to gaze at the enormous wreaths of flowers which almost covered the bright coloured union jacks in which the coffins were wrapped; the solemn notes of music that echoed and reverberated through the old-fashioned town that has witnessed so much of history; and Dover Castle towering high above everything, proudly defiant, with its fluttering flag almost exclaiming to the dead, "You did not die in vain."

When, after the service was over, we who had paid our last tribute to our fallen comrades, took our ship to London under her own steam, for by this time we had patched our steam pipe and already made good many of the defects consequent upon the action.

It took two months to repair our bows and fit us with a new stem, and we got a fine slice of leave. I knew, the moment that we had rammed *G.42* that this would happen, because we could not get off scot free from a bump like that, and so my enthusiastic prophecy, which escaped my lips in that second of excitement, came true.

The appended copy of a page from the "London Gazette" gives the awards and honours conferred by His Majesty on those who took part in this particular destroyer action, and the lists following the despatch show what our casualties were in the *Broke*. In addition to the wounded mentioned, there were a number

of slightly wounded, which made the total casualties up to fifty-seven.

SIXTH SUPPLEMENT TO THE *LONDON GAZETTE*
Of *TUESDAY, the 8th of MAY, 1917*

Admiralty, S.W.
10th May, 1917

HONOURS FOR SERVICE IN THE ACTION BETWEEN H.M. SHIPS *Swift* AND *Broke* AND GERMAN DESTROYERS, ON THE NIGHT OF THE 20TH TO 21ST APRIL, 1917.

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the appointment of the undermentioned Officers to be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order, in recognition of their services in command of H.M.S. *Swift* and H.M.S. *Broke* respectively, on the night of the 20th to 21st April, 1917, when they successfully engaged a flotilla of five or six German destroyers, of which two were sunk:—

Cdr. (now Capt.) Ambrose Maynard Peck, R.N.

Cdr. (now Capt.) Edward Ratcliffe Garth Russell Evans, C.B., R.N.

The KING has further been graciously pleased to give orders for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to the undermentioned Officers for the services during this action:—

Lieut. Goeffrey Victor Hickman, R.N.

Navigator and second in command of H.M.S. *Broke*. He assisted with great coolness in handling the ship in action. His proper appreciation of the situation when one enemy destroyer was torpedoed, which his commanding officer had made ready to ram, enabled course to be altered in time to ram the next astern.

Lieut. Robert Douglas King-Harman, R.N. Navigating Officer of H.M.S. *Swift*.

He was of the utmost assistance to his commanding officer throughout.

Lieut. Maximilian Carden Despard, R.N.

First and Gunnery Lieut. of H.M.S. *Broke*. He controlled gun fire and gave the orders which resulted in an enemy destroyer being torpedoed.

Lieut. Henry Antony Simpson, R.N.

Executive Officer and Gunnery Lieut. of H.M.S. *Swift*. He displayed great coolness and method in the control of fire which he had very ably organised and zealously drilled, and greatly assisted his commanding officer throughout the action.

Surg. Prob. Christopher Thomas Helsham, R.N.V.R. (*Broke*).

Surg. Prob. John Sinclair Westwater, R.N.V.R. (*Swift*).

Worked with great energy and ability in attending to the wounded.

Gnr. (T.) Henry Turner, R.N. (*Swift*).

Obtained a hit with a torpedo on one of the enemy destroyers.

Gnr. (T.) Frederick Grinney, R.N. (*Broke*).

Gave orders for the firing of the torpedo which struck on to the enemy destroyers.

Mid. Donald Allen Gyles, R.N.R. (*Broke*).

He took charge on the forecastle, and, although wounded in the eye, organised a gun's crew from the survivors of the crews which had suffered heavy casualties and kept the guns on the forecastle going. He repelled the German sailors who swarmed on board from the destroyer which was rammed, and remained at his post until after the action was finished.

The following awards have also been approved:—

To receive the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

A.B. William George Rawles, O.N., 201767 (Po.).

Although he had four bad wounds in his legs, in addition to other injuries, he continued to steer H.M.S. *Broke* in action until the enemy destroyer had been rammed.

To receive the Distinguished Service Medal

* Yeo. Sig. William Smith, O.N., 213714 (Po.).

O.S. Herbert Thomas Huntley Fowle, O.N., S.S., 7516 (Po.).

Sto. Charles Williams, R.N.R. (New Zealand), O.N., 27358.

Sto., 1st Cl., John Clasper, O.N., S.S., 103869 (R.F.R., Po./B. 4652).

Ch. Sto. William Shearn, O.N., 279752 (Po.).

P.O. Tel. Harry Sedgley, O.N., 239909 (Dev.).

P.O. William Edward Strevens, O.N., 232542 (Po.).

P.O. George Henry Froud, O.N., 218906 (Po.).

P.O. Albert Last, O.N., 208689 (Po.).

A.B. Sidney Clarke, O.N., J. 5244 (Po.).

A.B. Charles Reginald Norton, O.N., J. 18427 (Po.).

A.B. Ernest Ramsden Ingleson, O.N., J. 5723 (Po.).

A.B. Walter Frederick Mair, O.N., J. 55500 (Po.).

C.P.O. John Crother Ashton, O.N., 157639 (Po.).

P.O. Sidney Albert Simmonds, O.N., 180242 (Po.).

P.O. Charles Henry Daish, O.N., 182240 (Po.).

Ch. E. R. A. William Culverwell, O.N., 268992 (Ch.).

P.O. Frederick Percy Mursell, O.N., 162299 (Po.).

Ch. Sto. Henry Simmons, O.N., 276070 (Ch.).

Sto. P.O. William Edward Heaseman, O.N., 361422 (Po.).

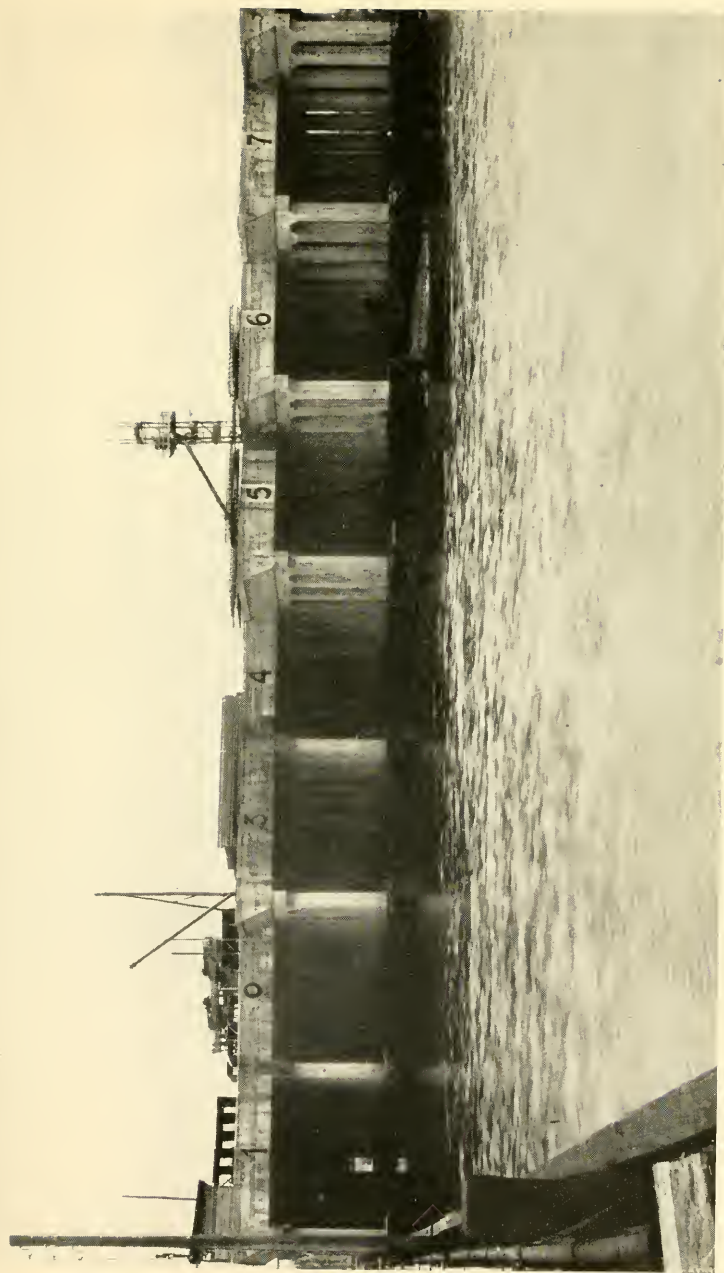
Yeo. Sig. Albert Ebenezer James, O.N., 210513 (Po.).

Sto. P.O. James Bryant, O.N., 310822 (Po.).

Sto. Edward Gilfillan, R.N.R., O.N., 9099, S.

Sto. Sidney Frederick Brooks, O.N., S.S. 111490 (Po.).

* Smith received a bar to the D.S.M., which he had already gained in the earlier coast bombardments.



THE GERMAN SUBMARINE SHELTERS AT BRUGES.

The following Officers and Men have been mentioned in despatches:

Engr. Lieut.-Cdr. (now Engr. Cdr.) James Hughes, R.N.
 Engr. Lieut.-Cdr. (now Engr. Cdr.) Thomas George Coomber, R.N.
 Lieut.-Cdr. Arthur Jermyn Landon, R.N.
 Sub-Lieut. Whitworth Brady Nicholson, R.N.
 Act. Sub-Lieut. Lionel Hill Peppé, N.R.
 Wt. Mech. James Coughlan, R.N.
 Act. Art-Engr. Charlie Rodges Barter, R.N.
 Mid. Maurice Theobald Maud, R.N.R.
 P.O. Charles Christmas Brown, O.N., 155936 (Po.).
 Ldg. Sig. William Page, O.N., 227145 (Po.).
 Ldg. Sto. Frank William King, O.N., 306009 (Po.).
 Ldg. Sto. Eli Daniels, O.N., 294996 (Po.).
 E.R.A., 2nd Cl., Walter Blanchard Wellman, O.N., M. 1218 (Po.).
 A.B. William George Cleeter, O.N., J. 21405 (Po.).
 O.S. Sidney John Thomas Taylor, O.N., S.S. 7576 (Po.).
 Sto., 2nd Cl., Frederick Arthur Hickman, O.N., K. 33575 (Po.).
 Sto., 1st Cl., George Henry Doe, O.N., K. 7694 (Po.).
 A.B. John Henton, O.N., J. 17762 (Po.).
 Sto., 1st Cl., Albert Edward Glover, O.N., 232320 (Po.).
 A.B. Henry Alfred Hitchin, O.N., 228372 (Po.).
 Ldg. Sig. Charles Clause Higgins, O.N., J. 10417 (Po.).
 S.B. A. James Gradwell, O.N., M. 16759 (Po.).
 Sto., 1st Cl., Ernest Muff, O.N., K. 32517 (Po.).
 Sig. Sidney Charles Helps, R.N.V.R., O.N., Z/9587 (Tyneside).
 Ch. E.R.A. Ralph Victor Nelson, O.N., 272497 (Po.).
 E.R.A. Henry Albert Riley, O.N., M. 4676 (Po.).
 Sto. P.O. Matthew Lawson, O.N., 303088 (R.F.R., Ch/B. 5783).
 Ldg. Stoker Frederick Thomas Yapp, O.N., K. 1672 (Po.).
 Sto., 1st Cl., John Kempton Falconer, O.N., K. 32518 (Po.).
 Sto., 1st Cl., Charles Herbert Harvey, O.N., S.S. 115725 (Po.).
 Sto. P.O. Thomas Davies, O.N., 289400 (Po.).
 Ldg. Sto. Charles Edward Walls, O.N., K. 969 (Po.).
 Sto. Albert Boyland, R.N.R., O.N., S. 4945.
 Sto., 1st Cl., Charles Edward Miller, O.N., 280751 (R.F.R.Po/B.2355).

The following promotions have been made for service in this action:

Commanders to be Captains.

Cdr. Ambrose Maynard Peck.
 Cdr. Edward Ratcliffe Garth Russell Evans, C.B.

Engr. Lieut.-Commanders to be Commanders.

Engr. Lieut.-Cdr. James Hughes.
 Engr. Lieut.-Cdr. Thomas George Coomber.

All to date, April 21st, 1917.

The following officers have been noted for early promotion:

Sub-Lieut. Whitworth Brady Nicholson, R.N.
 Act. Sub-Lieut. Lionel Hill Peppé, R.N.
 Wt. Mech. James Coughlan, R.N.
 Mid. Maurice Theobald Maud, R.N.R.

Before concluding this chapter, I must say that the night patrol organisation of the *Broke* didn't give us much rest; it was not meant to, and we on the bridge did all we could to keep ourselves awake, and to qualify properly for membership of the "Owls' Club," as we called ourselves. Generally speaking, the navigator and I conned the ship alternately for an hour at a time, the first lieutenant and the sub, took charge of the torpedo and gunnery control in hourly turns as well, and those not actually taking charge, crouched under the shelter of the bridge screens and, with half-closed eyes, listened to the other pair discussing with gay seriousness the affairs of the nation, the conduct of the war and the hundreds of little items of interest that go to fill up the horizon of a sailor's utterable thoughts.

The navigator of the *Broke*, in particular, possessed the retentive memory of the sailor, which, combined with his gift of expression, made him an excellent bridge companion and a worthy supporter of the "Owls' Club."

We stuck to facts at these séances, and kept those occasional waves of sentiment and patriotic appreciation for the wounded soldiers in the hospital ships, that we now and then rubbed shoulders with, in Calais or Boulogne, when we gladly contributed for their comfort those little stores of "Woodbines" and "Three Castles" that our miniature canteen contained—that was about all we had to give.

Before I finally break away from the subject of the *Swift* and *Broke* destroyer scrap, I must include a little story about the R.N.V.R. signalman, whose curiosity led him into trouble.

The Webley-Scott magazine revolvers with which we

were supplied are not nice things to play with; accidents very easily happen to men unskilled in handling them. To avoid constantly loading and unloading them, and to have them always ready for action, in this ship I kept the revolvers loaded. Directly the *Broke* was secured to her buoy in Dover Harbour, after her night patrol, it was one of the duties of "our Mr. Smith" to take these revolvers down from the range-finder platform and place them on the mattress of the bridge cabin which was never occupied by day. He then locked the cabin and returned the key to the keyboard.

So much for our state of readiness; but there is such a thing as being too ready, especially when people are over-curious. I had given orders that no one was to be admitted into the bridge cabin without my own permission; but the day before we had this fight, our shipwright was working in the cabin while most of us were asleep. A young signalman was keeping watch, and seeing the shipwright come out of the cabin and leave the door open while he went down for some tools, the youngster, whose curiosity overcame him, walked into the cabin and found all the revolvers sleeping peacefully side by side, under the notice, "Dangerous; don't touch."

But the warning was not good enough for our young friend. He picked up one of the revolvers and while he was turning it over in his hands to examine it, it suddenly went off and shot him in the fleshy part of his left arm. The poor boy was very frightened when blood spurted out and covered the deck of the bridge cabin. Then my surgeon was called and, after inspecting the wound and bandaging it, he came to me and reported. I was not very pleased at being awakened from my sleep after so

many nights at sea, but hearing that there had been an accident I quickly made my way on deck, where the doctor, the patient and Smith, the yeoman of signals, were waiting for instructions. To say the least of it, I was annoyed at the man putting himself out of action when signalmen were so scarce, and I was angry that the man should have pryed into my cabin when he should have been keeping his signal watch. I determined to give him a lesson, and instead of his getting any sympathy, I said, "What do you mean by shooting yourself in my cabin." The poor little signalman was taken aback at the sharp way in which I addressed him and, being thoroughly unnerved by the accident, he suddenly burst into tears. I am afraid I was brute enough to say, "I shall give you fourteen days cells when you come out of hospital for unlawfully shooting yourself in my cabin."

The man then went to hospital, and a few days afterwards I came to the naval sick quarters at Deal with a motor-car loaded with cigarettes, fruit, papers and every variety of article that I could think of for my wounded. My wife came with me, carrying two large baskets full of nice things. The naval nursing sisters showed us to the bedsides of the wounded men from the *Swift* and the *Broke*, and we plied them with about as much as the tables by the little beds would carry. Looking at the report over one man's bed, I saw that he was a signalman, which I could not understand, seeing that the only injured signalman in the action had been blown to smithereens. I said to the man before me, "Where were you in the action"? He looked rather wistfully at me and replied, "I'm afraid sir, I am the one you gave fourteen days' cells to, for shooting myself

in your cabin," and then he added that he was very unhappy at missing a nice little fight through such an act of thoughtlessness.

I felt most awfully sorry for him, and quickly put his thoughts at rest by informing him that I thought he had been punished enough and that I would not sign the warrant for sending him to cells. His boyish face lit up and he was soon weighing in with the best of them at the chocolates and fruits.

H.M.S. *BROKE*

21st April, 1917

KILLED

Geoffrey G. Ivens	..	..	..	Leading Seaman
George Tubb	..	..	..	A.B.
Joe W. Bagnall	..	..	..	A.B.
Christopher T. Samways	..	..	..	A.B.
Robert V. Towers	..	..	..	O.S.
Harry Hosier	..	..	..	O.S.
Harry G. Orchard	..	..	..	Sto. P.O.
Charles E. Dart	..	..	..	Ldg. Sto.
David Brian	..	..	..	Ldg. Sto.
Thomas B. Bannister	..	..	..	Ldg. Sto.
Alfred Webb	..	..	..	Sto.
Robert Norford	..	..	..	Sto.
Fred Carder	..	..	..	Sto.
George W. Thompson	..	..	..	Sto.
Fred. R. Bailey	..	..	..	Sto., R.F.R.
William Thorpe	..	..	..	Sto.
James J. Rafferty	..	..	..	Sto.
Epton, Bellamy	..	..	..	Sto.
William Foxhall	..	..	..	Sto.
Samuel Field	..	..	..	Sto., R.F.R.
Walter H. Lockett	..	..	..	Sto., R.N.V.R.

Total 21

WOUNDED

Dangerous

Herbert Fowle .. 19, O.S. Multiple injuries.

KEEPING THE SEAS

Severe

Donald A. Gyles ..	19, Mid. R.N.R.	Wound of Orbit.
Arthur Read ..	24, Sto.	Wound of back.
Victor Yates ..	21, A.B.	Multiple wounds.
George Featherstone	21, A.B.	Wounds left foot.
Henry Camm ..	30, Ldg. Sto.	Multiple wounds left buttock.
Charles G. Jess ..	26, O.S.	Multiple wounds.
Sidney Clarke ..	24, A.B.	Wound of buttock.
William C. Turner	28, Sto.	Multiple wounds.
John Clasper ..	31, Sto.	Wounds of hip and buttock.
William Hanwell	25, Sto.	Multiple wounds.

Serious

William G. Rawles	36, A.B.	Shrapnel wound left side and left buttock.
Harry Sedgley ..	25, P.O. Tel.	Shrapnel wounds left thigh.
Albert J. Mitchell	26, Ldg. Sto.	Shrapnel wounds left eye, both shoulders, left knee.
Ernest Taylor ..	38, Sto.	Shrapnel wounds, chest scalp and arms.

Slight

Thomas E. Chitty	25, Sto.	Multiple wounds.
Ernest E. Stoles ..	21, O.S.	Wounds of head & forearm.
John T. Mabey ..	20, A.B.	Abrasions over left clavicle.
Leonard Robinson..	22, A.B.	Abrasions.
James Pott ..	20, C.Q.S.	Wound right forearm.
Herbert Clarke ..	35, Sto.	Wound right upper arm, forearm and right leg.
George Huke ..	19, Off. Std.	Wound left forearm.
Samuel Pichess ..	19, Sig.	Wound left side.
J. W. Wright ..	46, Sto.	Wound head.

Slightly wounded Returned to Duty

F. Sleight ..	..	Sto. P.O.	Wound left big toe.
Fred Main ..	..	A.B.	Grazes.
Thomas Maguire	..	Ldg. Sto.	Grazes.

			Officers.	Men.	Total
Killed ..	..	..	0	21	21
Wounded—					
Dangerous ..	..	..		1	27
Severe ..	..	..	1	9	
Serious ..	..	..		4	
Slight ..	..	..		9	
Returned to duty		..		3	

 Total, 48

CHAPTER X

A BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY

WHEN I said in the last chapter that we got two months' leave while a new bow was being fitted to the *Broke*, I meant that we got two months' respite from Dover and the dark night patrols.

The day of her arrival in London Docks, the *Broke* was taken charge of by Messrs. Fletcher, Sons and Fearnall, who set to work to make good her defects and to patch up the ragged holes that were everywhere apparent in her funnels and upper works. The lip of the German torpedo tube which had stuck in her bow was lifted out, and subsequently made into a huge bronze bell, which now hangs, suitably inscribed, on the quarter deck of the ship.

Fletcher's yard being so close to London, Sir Edward Carson, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Admiral Jellicoe, the First Sea Lord, and other members of the Board motored down to inspect the ship and to address a few words of congratulation to our ship's company. I learnt from Admiral Jellicoe that he wished me to go to Queens-town in order to meet the first six United States destroyers, that were due to arrive on or about the 1st May. The idea of my going there to welcome the first division of destroyers which were being sent over by our new naval ally, was to give them fresh impressions of de-

stroyer fighting, and to tell them anything that I found out in my patrols which would help the American destroyer officers who had had no recent war experience.

It was a delightful opportunity for me to renew my friendship with the Americans, from whom I had received unbounded hospitality during four months holiday in the States in 1914. To begin with, I met Admiral Sims and his staff in London. The keenness and enthusiasm of this great American naval officer had a most refreshing effect upon me, and I set off for Queenstown with his aide-de-camp, Lieut.-Commander Babcock and Lieut.-Commander Tobey, of the United States Naval Pay Corps, delighted at being selected to work with the Americans. I had not landed in Ireland since the war.

When our little party arrived in Kingstown, the Americans were interested in everything they saw. The well-known old man on the railway station platform, who walked up and down shouting out, "Irish Times, a penny," marked them down for his special prey when he saw that they were in a different uniform from those he had grown accustomed to. Everything here seemed so unwarlike and when, about midday, we arrived at Queenstown and looked at the peaceful scene from the Admiral's windows, we never dreamed of what was being carried on under the direction of Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, the Naval Commander-in-Chief.

Queenstown was the home of the "Q" ships, the disguised merchant vessels that went forth to be torpedoed and attacked until, when they were sorely injured and sinking, their aggressor, the big, ocean-going German submarine, would approach them to gloat over the damage done and then herself be laid out by the

hidden batteries of guns, if a sufficient number of fighting men were left alive and so available when the opportunity presented itself.

No better example could have been set us than that afforded by those in the "Q" ships, who won their V.C.'s and D.S.O.'s under conditions which, to hear of, made one's flesh creep. We spent a few days at Queenstown before the American destroyers arrived, and during this short time we learnt something of the feats of arms performed by the "Q" ship heroes. It must be remembered that the "Q" boats were employed to sink submarines when our anti-submarine devices were very far from perfect and the Allies were hard put to it to hold their own against the ever-increasing number of enemy submarines, which were now being met in almost every part of the sea.

The American destroyers and patrol boats were sent over first to Queenstown and then to Brest, Cherbourg, Gibraltar, etc., to patrol along the traffic routes and hunt the submarine down. At this time the Germans were endeavouring to force us to adopt the convoy system; when we eventually did adopt the convoy system, the Germans did all they possibly could to stop us employing it; but of that, more later on.

I suppose 1917 was for us the most critical year of the war at sea, and the welcome addition of the American naval forces undoubtedly tightened the Allies' grip and served to harass the enemy more and more, as the United States continued to pour in their patrol boats, which now were being built with astonishing swiftness.

On a beautiful spring morning the first six destroyers appeared on the western horizon. Our little party boarded the *Wadsworth*, the senior officer's ship, and

accompanied the division up harbour. This division consisted of the:—*Davis, Wadsworth, Porter, McDougall, Conyngham, Wainwright.*

They were splendid little ships, speed from 29—30 knots, nearly 1,100 tons displacement, capable of steaming 3,000 miles at 15 knots without re-fuelling. The *Wadsworth* class were armed with four 4-inch guns and four pairs of 21-inch torpedo tubes. They carried a hundred officers and men each, and from the day the first six boats arrived at Queenstown, the training of the *personnel* was carried out, with a view to manning more and more destroyers, in the following manner:—

One extra officer was carried in each ship and a certain number of ratings were continually drafted on board, extra to the complements. As soon as these men had attained the proper degree of efficiency, which they quickly did under the war patrol conditions, a proportion of senior officers and ratings returned to the United States, to form the nucleus of a brand new destroyer crew. This highly trained proportion quickly handed out their experience in tabloid form to the remainder of their ship's company, and the constant circulation yielded wonderful results. It also served to promote competition and to make the younger officers extra keen, so that they would the sooner become eligible to command the older vessels.

Those in the first six destroyers lost no time in getting themselves ready for their patrol work; in fact, they expressed their readiness to go out on patrol directly their boats had oiled, but the Admiral kept them at Queenstown for four days while they were fitted with depth charges and depth charge release gear; besides which, they had our identification signals arranged for

them. A set of confidential books, similar to those supplied to our own ships, was given to each vessel.

Commander Taussig, of the *Wadsworth*, was in charge of the six destroyers, and he was an old friend of Admiral Jellicoe's, having been wounded in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 as an Ensign, when by chance he had been a hospital mate of the Admiral, who was himself wounded in that campaign. Taussig was full of brains and go, and I was very much impressed by him, but the same may be said of all the destroyer captains who came over with these six splendidly suitable vessels. In the later days of the war I occasionally heard from one or other of these men, with whom I have endeavoured to keep in touch. If I was impressed with the Americans, I may safely say that they were all impressed with Admiral Bayly, who was one of the sternest and straightest men with whom I have ever come in contact.

In the very short time I was at Queenstown, I learned to respect the Admiral and to admire him as I have seldom admired any man. But with all his sternness and in spite of his exacting way, which got the best possible effort out of every man in his command, Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly had a heart of gold, and I only wish I had had the honour to serve under him for years instead of only for days.

I watched with consuming interest the building up of the "Queenstown Navy." It did one good to hear the Admiral talk to the United States Naval officers, and my word, it did one good to hear them talk of "Uncle Lewis," as they called him. It was my privilege to accompany the commanding officers to Admiralty House whenever they were invited up to dinner, and we used to spend the happiest evenings in the society of the

Admiral and his niece. Perhaps we talked "shop" and war, but "Uncle Lewis" had a happy knack of making one as interested in "shop" and war as he did in everything else, with his magnetic personality and steel-true nature. I could not believe that this was *the* Lewis Bayly whose name had struck terror into the hearts of certain naval officers I had met, but I realise now that they must have been the exceptions who did *not* do their job.

Sir Lewis Bayly soon won the confidence of all who were placed under him, and he picked out and secured for his commanders, men whose achievements in this war make one's pulse quicken and one's heart leap with joy and pride of race.

Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., the celebrated submarine "strafer," was just *one* of Uncle Lewis's protégés, and I will warrant that if Admiral Bayly was proud of Captain Campbell, this gallant officer was proud enough to be numbered amongst Admiral Bayly's friends. Of the Admiral, it hurts me to feel that somewhere in South Devon that very gallant able gentleman is devoting his time and occupying his energies on the land, for the Navy employs him no more. But there are some of us in the Navy now with minds of our own and nothing in our naval careers of which to be ashamed, who have learnt from "Uncle Lewis" how to face danger, moral and physical, with the unflinching gaze of that very true British sailor, and it is up to us to benefit by his example. I don't think any American naval officer will disagree with what I have said.

In a matter of four days, the first six United States destroyers left for their various patrol stations. It was my privilege to go out in the *Wadsworth*, and that was

what I meant by the heading of this chapter. For me it was a "Busman's holiday" to go out in a destroyer on patrol after five hundred nights at sea in the war, and to have no responsibility.

But I am sea-wolf enough properly to appreciate such a privilege. The destroyers steamed out in the early afternoon, and the Admiral stood on the roof of his old-fashioned house to see us one by one pass by. I expect every captain glanced aft and along his destroyer's side to see that nothing was amiss, for nothing escaped the searching glance of the Vice-Admiral commanding on the coast of Ireland. In a short half-hour these six beautiful ships were lifting their noses and gently responding to the heave of the Atlantic swell. As they dipped after rising to each successive wave, the well-known hiss of rushing water struck its familiar note on my ear, and my heart leapt with gladness to be again at sea, with new forces, to seek out and destroy the enemy. If ever man could infuse patriotism and keenness into a seaman's soul, it was Admiral Bayly. Long after the last golden rays of the setting sun had ceased to reflect on the side lights of the six United States destroyers, and long after darkness had spread over the waters of this vast Atlantic, one felt that there was one sitting at Admiralty House, reading every signal that our wireless sparked out, thinking, disposing and working us like chessmen to the best advantage; but what comforted and cheered us most was that that real man would reach out and save if anything befell us, his newly-adopted children of to-day. I spent the best part of a week with the U.S. naval force. The first night out a terrific explosion occurred at about eleven o'clock; I thought we had been torpedoed, but no, the officer

of the watch had seen what he took to be the wash of a submarine and had charged right at it, and then let go a depth charge. We couldn't say what he had seen, but he had certainly done right.

The alarm bells rang, the members of the ship's company not on watch went to their station forthwith, and a search was made by Captain Taussig round about this position, but nothing was ever seen.

It took one very little time to appreciate that the American destroyer officers needed no one to "hold their hands." They were very quick of brain, keen and enthusiastic, and all out to fight and help the Allies to make good. After four or five days at sea in the *Wadsworth* our patrol expired, and we proceeded to Berehaven to oil and rest for two days before going out on the next patrol, which was to last for the best part of a week. If I remember rightly, the patrols were arranged to do six days out and two days in harbour for fuelling, standing off, and making good the little defects which make their appearance even in the best constructed torpedo craft after constant steaming and knocking about in a seaway.

The men of the United States Navy appreciated the beauty of Berehaven, surrounded as it was with magnificent hills, pretty little land-locked creeks, such as Glengariff, and dotted about with islets and rocks, which afforded a welcome change to the eye after the long patrols, which had a certain sameness about them, and were not usually marked by any incident of particular interest. After my sea-trip I said good-bye to the "Wadsworths" and felt that I had been made a really welcome guest.

The Americans realised as quickly as any of the Allies

that depth charges, to fulfil their proper mission, should be used as freely as possible, and it was not long before the U.S. destroyer captains were begging Admiral Bayly to fit their ships with tiers of depth charges, instead of only a couple, which was the number carried by the first destroyers to patrol. As the supplies became available and the sterns of the ships were fitted to carry a large number, one grew quite used to seeing these craft practically laden with water bombs, which could be set to go off at four or six different depths ranging from 50 to 300 feet.

I told the American destroyer officers what I had found, from my own experience, was useful in patrol work, just as I should have imparted the information to any new destroyer captain who had joined my own division; that is briefly as follows:—

(1). Not to make unnecessary wireless telegraphy signals, and to reduce all signalling to a minimum.

(2). Not to make unnecessary reports to the Admiral, who wants to know when things are going wrong, rather than when things are all in order.

(3). To be most particular about look-outs and not to allow any look-out to be on for more than half-an-hour, nor to be relieved at night time until his relief had been with him for at least five minutes, so as to get accustomed to the darkness.

(4). To fire a shot at a periscope for the simple reason that the splash would be a good guide to the eye and thus facilitate the dropping of the depth charge near to the objective.

(5). To be most careful about darkening the ships at night; one of my few criticisms of the American destroyers was that they used canvas covers over their

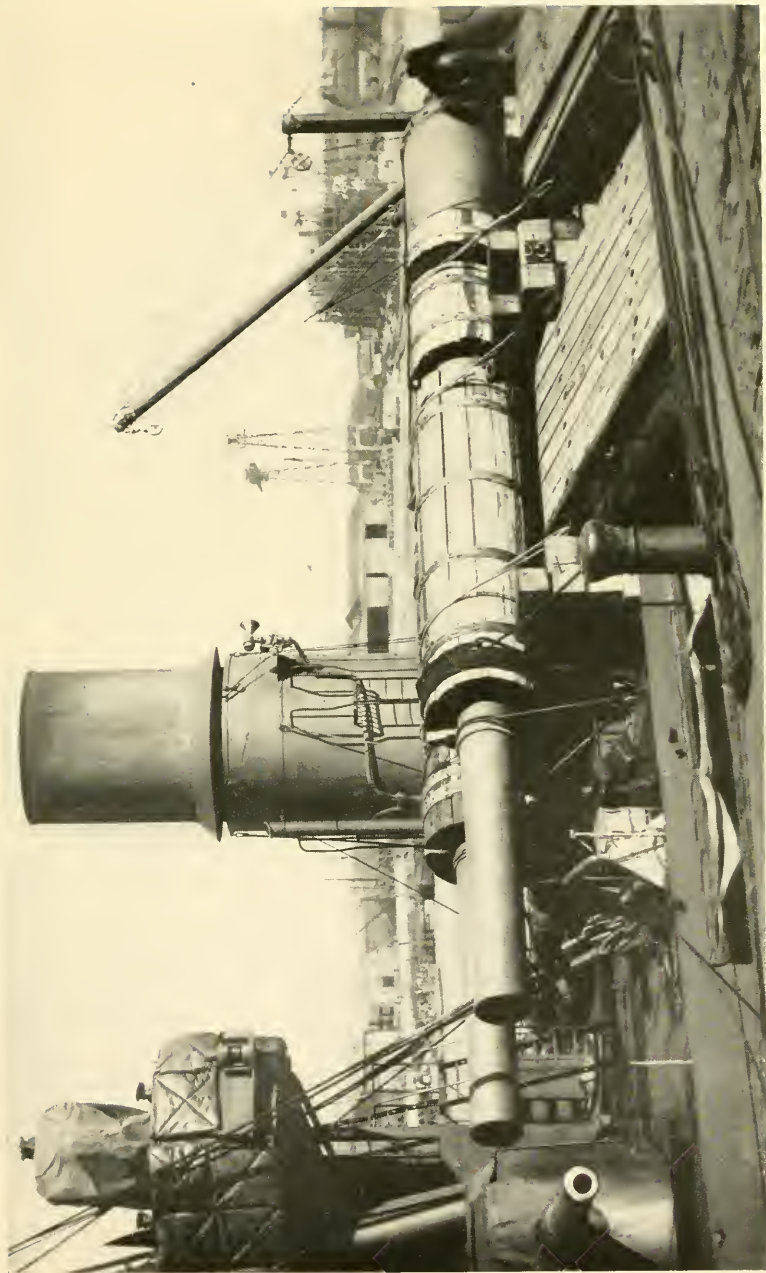
scuttles, which should, I thought, have been fitted with "dead lights"—these canvas covers were apt to work off in heavy weather, especially if they were only secured by officers' stewards, who, in the case of the U.S. naval forces, were usually Phillipine boys or coloured men, not necessarily possessing the "habit of the sea."

(6). To ram whenever possible, even although their own ships might sink in consequence, for they were to be supplied with Carley life floats, which were likely to be picked up; and I emphasised that the Allies could well afford to lose a ship for every submarine sunk.

In the matter of colouring, I thought the upper works of these destroyers should have been painted a lighter grey than their hulls, and the top-masts should be lowered if possible, for these destroyers were rather lofty and their tall top-masts served to attract attention. This was before the days when we employed different colour schemes for camouflaging to any great extent.

I am afraid I was also guilty of suggesting that small arms should be in a very accessible place in fine weather, and ready for instant use. This may be considered a little unnecessary in the Atlantic patrol, where we were a long way from the enemy shores, but I always thought it better to be prepared to kill Germans who might suddenly be found on the deck of a submarine on the surface at night. This remark applied also to machine-guns, where they were carried.

I did not think that the American officers and men had adequate clothing at this time, to keep them warm and comfortable in bad weather; nor were they well supplied with leather sea boots. I thought the Americans wore insufficient under-clothing, too, which would lead them into all sorts of trouble later on, when they had



GUNS READY FOR LANDING FROM MONITOR "GENERAL CRAUFORD."

to face the rigours of the damp climate hereabouts; besides which, nobody can do his work properly at sea unless he is well clad.

I suggested that paper work should be reduced to a minimum, but in the elimination of unnecessary correspondence I think the U.S. naval forces had us well beaten at all times. Apropos of this subject, I noticed that every American destroyer carried a yeoman, who acted as stenographer and clerk; much of the C.O.'s time was saved by his employment, and the introduction of ratings skilled in shorthand would be an asset for our own destroyers and small craft. It is my experience that conscientious officers waste, I will not say spend, a great deal of their time over correspondence and office work which probably would be better done if the American system were employed. I myself have never treated office work very seriously during the war, although I must confess I have often been worried and hampered by it. An instance: After being nine or ten nights at sea in succession, I had secured my destroyer to the buoy in Dover Harbour, gone down to my cabin, where I thawed myself out with a cup of boiling cocoa, and then turned into my bunk to sleep during the forenoon. I had just dozed off when a signalman came in and read out, "From Captain (D) to *Broke*. Report by signal why you have not complied with my _____," referring to some order that had evidently been overlooked. I was very sleepy, but my conscience was fairly clear, since I never let the correspondence accumulate. I could not think what it referred to and so I said, "I will answer it when I have had a couple of hours' sleep," for it was evidently not important. I had no sooner fallen asleep, or so it seemed to me, when down

came the signalman again with a somewhat rude reminder from Captain (D). So I got out of bed and hunted out the order, which I found stated that a report was to be sent in every month giving the amount of ammunition above 4-in. expended by the vessels under the Captain (D's) orders. I had read the order to mean the *Swift* and the small monitors which were armed with 7.5-inch and 9.2-inch guns, and had therefore paid no attention, but as I had twice been woken up I decided to go ashore and protest, for I had not really deserved to be shaken up in this way for no reason whatever. Accordingly I went to Captain (D's) office, full of fury and ready to explain that since my ship carried no guns bigger than a 4-inch, we had not expended ammunition of a greater size, and that on behalf of myself and others who might be so disturbed in the few quiet hours we got during the long dark night patrol this damn nonsense should cease. But I found that it was not Captain (D) who had sent the signal, but a long white-faced lanky gentleman with well oiled hair, who acted as his secretary. Since this time I have paid less attention than ever to paper work in destroyers, realising that half the rude signals and urgent memos come from people who have nothing better to do, rather than directly from the powers that be.

All service in light craft, which ships are commanded by youngsters, tends towards a kind of destroyer Bolshevism; most of us did our paper work with a fair degree of conscientiousness, but one destroyer officer who once served in the Dover Patrol developed into a perfect Trotsky; he never answered a letter; he never read an order, and moreover he prevented anybody else in his ship from paying any attention to the accumulating

enquiries as to why this or that had not been done. He was tolerated for some time because he had a happy knack of always getting there when it was necessary to be on the spot. However, those in the pay, victualling and discipline offices eventually united, very properly it is true, and brought about his downfall, for the sake of law and order. A successor was appointed, who boarded the "Unnamed One's" craft. Mr. Nameless conducted him round the beautifully clean and orderly little ship, if it is possible to have a thirty-knotter beautifully clean and orderly in war time. The little destroyer was obviously efficient and the newcomer, taking her at face value, consented to assume that the confidential books were as they should be, when the captain suddenly threw open a little trap hatch on the deck abaft the ward room, and, taking from his pocket a bundle of weekly orders, he slung them down with a swish, slammed the hatch and said, "If you want any orders, letters or instructions, you will find them all down there. I never read them, but I take care not to lose them. They go down directly they come."

Although I do not pretend to set this young gentleman up as an example, I do consider that we have been unnecessarily handicapped by paper work in war time, and much time might have been saved by the inclusion of a stenographer in every destroyer's complement, who could have shepherded the papers and reduced them to the aforesaid law and order.

Pardon the digression, and return to my friends from the States. I also suggested to the Americans that when in Berehaven or other such places, the crew should be encouraged as much as possible to get physical exercise and fresh air. This may sound rather nonsense, but

a destroyer in bad weather is not the place to get fresh air, except for those on the bridge, for the decks are awash and heavy seas break over them, making it impossible for people to remain on deck, and the fog and frowst in all torpedo craft, down below, would take more than pen and paper to describe.

I gave them our own gun and torpedo stations for fighting patrol work, which were very good since they were the outcome of many officers' experience for several years of war. Amongst other things I advised them to zig-zag as much as possible when steaming under 18 knots; Taussig and I both agreed that during the hours of darkness, and particularly during twilight hours, either the captain or the second in command should be on the bridge in addition to the officer of the watch; this being at a time when the submarine could see a destroyer without being seen herself, and therefore the most dangerous time for the T.B.D. I reminded my friend about taking advantage of the moon and sun, with reference to placing vessels in position for attacking.

I noticed that American destroyers were supplied with light yellow or neutral shades over their prismatic binoculars, which made it possible to see extremely well when looking in the direction of the sun. We have not this arrangement fitted to our glasses, but it is, I think, a good thing to make use of.

Our fellows in the Dover Patrol got very clever at snap-shot firing; driftwood or other floating wreckage, which was constantly met with, would be used as a target, and I know in the U.S.S. *Wadsworth* the officers were always practising their men in this way. I also advised them to take constant advantage of the aiming

rifles on their guns, to practise the crews quickly at coming into action. I suggested to them occasionally firing off their guns to exercise the crew and keep them from being gun-shy. There were a certain number of very young hands in the United States destroyers, and like our own youngsters, they probably suffered from gun-shyness to begin with.

I remember Admiral Bayly gave the American officers some very good hints with reference to closing torpedoed or sinking ships, and he told them many little stories concerning survivors. I remember he mentioned picking up, with the *Adventure*, a crowd of survivors from a sloop which had been torpedoed. The men had got on to the upper of two Carley floats, which had stuck together, and they were able to keep quite dry; in fact, if I remember rightly, when picked up after being two or three days at sea, one of these men was playing a mandoline and the other the good old sea-service mouth organ. It was, of course, summer weather.

It would be well to insert a little story I heard about Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, concerning the unrest in south-west Ireland at the time of which I am writing. I give it without prejudice—it may not even be true.

The Mayor of Cork asked that his city should be placed out of bounds to British and American sailors. Cork was not interested in the Allied navies, and did not wish to have our sailors in her city, at least that is how the story goes. But the development of Queenstown as a naval base brought more and more money to the port until, after the Americans had settled down, it almost became "their city"; money was spent most lavishly in Queenstown by Uncle Sam's boys, and the residents in consequence grew richer and richer, until their neigh-

bours in the larger city of Cork were worked up to a splendid pitch of jealousy. The Mayor, supported by sundry members of the corporation, visited the Naval Commander-in-Chief at Admiralty House by appointment; according to the story, which was told me by an American naval officer, the following dialogue ensued:—

Uncle Lewis (On the mayoral party entering the room): Sit down.

Mayor: On behalf of the city of Cork I ask you, Admiral, to cancel your order that Cork should be out of bounds to officers and men of the British and U.S. naval forces.

Uncle Lewis (looking severely at the Mayor): Can you guarantee that officers and men of the British naval forces can visit Cork and walk through the streets without being insulted?

Mayor: I can not.

Uncle Lewis: Can you guarantee that officers and men of the U.S. naval forces can visit Cork and walk through the streets without being insulted?

Mayor: I can not.

Uncle Lewis: Can you guarantee that if the National Anthem is played in theatres and places of amusement in the presence of British officers and men, that the citizens of Cork will respect it and not receive it with booing and hissing?

Mayor: I can not.

Uncle Lewis: Can you guarantee that if the National Anthem of the United States of America is played in theatres and places of amusement in the presence of officers and men of the U.S. naval forces, that the citizens of Cork will respect it and not receive it with booing and hissing?

Mayor: I can not.

Uncle Lewis (throwing the door open, in a voice of thunder): Good-day.

Outside Admiralty House a number of friends and others interested in the deputation awaited, hopefully anticipating that the attractions of Cork would result in the lavish expenditure of money by the naval units, which it was supposed would shortly re-visit the city; they eagerly crowded round the Mayor, and one amongst them anxiously asked the Mayor to inform them of the results of the interview. The Mayor looked his interrogator straight in the face and replied: "Begorrah! We were lucky to escape with our loives."

It is interesting to note that the Americans launched over 60 magnificent sea-going destroyers in the year and a half of war which followed the epoch of this chapter, compared with a matter of four or five in 1914.

Before closing this chapter it might be mentioned that a splendid scheme for entertainment of the seamen was adopted by the Americans. The old swimming-bath at Queenstown was taken over and fitted up as a U.S. naval club, and an excellent temporary theatre was constructed where kinema exhibitions were held nightly, the films being displayed to the enlivening music of the "Dixies" naval band. Almost every variety of entertainment was catered for by the American Chief-of-Staff and his assistants. At this club one could get refreshments, which varied from an ice cream soda to a seven-course dinner, at almost cost price. I am bound to say that the comforts of the American sailors were infinitely better studied than those of the British blue. When one considers the difference in the pay of the two navies one cannot help an uneasy feeling that we have not done

enough for our own men. On the other hand, it struck me in the course of conversation that American sailors were no more contented than the British with their lot.

I always regretted that American destroyers got no fighting against above-water craft, for I could well have pictured them going into action, firm of purpose, smiling, undaunted and unafraid, and I remember well how some of them begged me to use my influence to get them employed on the Belgian coast to give them this fighting chance. By virtue of the Allied destroyer distribution, my friends were always kept to the duller work of policing the ocean far away from the North Sea, so that Allied and neutral merchant ships might ply their way in comparative freedom from attack. In doing this, although only occasional submarine hunts enlivened their patrol, when the American destroyers finally sailed for their home ports at the termination of hostilities, their captains, officers and men could proudly hold up their heads, content with the knowledge that they had done real work in protecting the sea-borne supplies which gave strength and final victory to the nations who were staking their all for right and democracy.

CHAPTER XI

BIKKY AND THE BIG GUNS

"THE TROUBLESOME TARGET"

Now this is the troublesome target.

And this is the Hun who lived in the troublesome target.

And this is the gun that strafed the Hun who lived in the troublesome target.

This is the tractor with plenty of power that goes about four miles an hour that mounted the gun that strafed the Hun that lived in the troublesome target.

This is the shot the sailor got and put on the tractor with plenty of power that goes about four miles an hour that mounted the gun that strafed the Hun that lived in the troublesome target.

This is the "Pod" that struck in the sod to spot the shot the sailors got and put on the tractor with plenty of power that goes about four miles an hour that mounted the gun that strafed the Hun that lived in the troublesome target.

Now this is old Bick, who's as fat as a tick, who sits on the pod that stuck in the sod to spot the shot the sailor got and put on the tractor with plenty of power that goes about four miles an hour that mounted the gun that strafed the Hun that lived in the troublesome target.

This is the fall of the first cannon ball as seen by old Bick who's as fat as a tick who sits on the pod that stuck in the sod to spot the shot the sailor got and put on the tractor with plenty of power that goes about four miles an hour that mounted the gun that strafed the Hun that lived in the troublesome target.

"NUBIAN NONSENSE"

The Germans, as we know, were great believers in mounting very heavy guns at odd spots along the Belgian coast and elsewhere, for the purpose of their strafing and general terrorisation schemes. These heavy gun batteries were sufficiently new and powerful to keep the

attacking monitors from seriously interfering with the Germans, and by day the British naval forces on the Belgian coasts were unable to approach, if the weather was clear, to within ten miles, after the operations conducted by Admirals Hood and Bacon in 1914-15.

In October, 1915, Commander Bickford and Lieutenant-Commander Lewin were selected by Admiral Bacon to take charge of the mounting and transport of heavy naval guns for counter-battery work against the Germans near the coast.

In the autumn of 1915 it was extremely difficult to obtain heavy guns, for our output of guns and munitions was not then great enough to supply at once all the pieces that were needed by those commanding in the various theatres of war. Admiral Bacon realised this more than most people and, without troubling the Admiralty to give him the weapons he required for shore use, he dismounted at Dover three Mark VI. 9.2-inch 22-ton guns from the three small "M" class monitors which were armed with these old-fashioned cannon. The monitors of this class were of very little use on the coast, except for the protection of the auxiliary patrols against a rush attack by above-water craft; they were of very frail construction, unsuitable for bombarding from a moving platform a fixed target in a well protected position. At the best of times they could only have been used for plastering large areas on account of the difficulty of accurate ranging when mounted on the little vessels.

Accordingly, two of these guns were lifted out and placed ashore at Dunkirk, while one was taken ashore at Dover, and there Commander Bickford practised mounting it under conditions as nearly as possible similar to those which obtained in the dunes "over the way."

This was a piece of forethought on the part of Admiral Bacon to avoid dumping the guns, gear and mounting, over in Belgium without any preliminary training and knowledge on the part of those who were to establish them. "Old Bick" was a sailor, and of no man that I have met can it be more truly said that "every hair of his head and beard was a rope yarn." He was a splendid seaman and, though he knew nothing whatever about mounting guns or shore artillery work when he joined Admiral Bacon's command, by exercising his seamanlike qualities and common-sense, he learnt all that there was to be learnt in this connection. He and Lewin together played with those 9.2's as though they were but the little 9-pounder muzzle-loaders, which twenty years ago, used to be displayed with exhibition naval guns' crews in the Royal Military Tournament at Islington.

For artillerymen, the crews of the "Baby Monitors" were used; the transport gear was literally begged, borrowed and stolen from the little dockyard at Dover and from the stores of the 15-inch howitzer batteries in France. Two Foster-Daimler naval tractors and eight trucks were obtained from the R.M.A. Depot at Eastney and, by improvising the stolen (or shall we say "found") timber, the guns were jacked, parbuckled, rolled, skidded and levered up on to the spare 15-inch howitzer trucks.

The officers and men who were to work these guns were practised under Admiral Bacon's supervision until they were drill perfect in mounting and dismounting them, but there was far more to be done in respect of these guns than many a man who saw them at Dover thought of.

Four 9.2's were eventually mounted in the dunes between Nieuport Bains and Oost Dunkirk Bains. At

first they were unprotected but, as may be expected, the Huns soon found them out, and the consequent staffing to which the guns and their crews were subjected, made it imperative that shell-proof emplacements should be constructed.

The crews lived in camps in the neighbourhood of their guns, which rejoiced in the names of "Lewin Camp," "Barbara Camp," "Halahan's Camp," and so forth, according to the fancy of the deity then in being in this sandy, wind and shell-swept little new naval world.

Parts of the crews of the little monitors continued with the guns until they were replaced by Royal Marine units later in the war. The naval counter-battering performed by the 9.2's was of great assistance to the French artillery, and the portion of the army holding that sector of the line.

Early in 1915, Admiral Bacon, produced a scheme for knocking out the "Tirpitz" battery of four 11-inch guns, which had caused great annoyance to the monitors and upset the Admiral's programme for bombarding from the sea. His plan was, originally, to mount a 12-inch gun on the dunes near Oost Dunkirk, where it would have a range of 38,000 yards, and be able to answer our enemy with the same precision which the Germans themselves had attained. Unfortunately the position selected was well within the range of the heavy German howitzers, placed behind their trenches, and during the course of construction, in spite of very good camouflage, the position was located, heavily shelled and practically destroyed. Old Bick took it as a matter of course; he was entirely unperturbed and, once the Admiral had decided on a new position, he drilled his minions into their usual high state of efficiency in gun-mounting with

a new piece, a 12-inch Mark X Dreadnought type of gun. It weighed 58 tons, while the mounting and slide together weighed another 53 tons. All of this "Old Bick" conveyed along the road of France and Belgium in a way that excited the admiration of the inhabitants. The great weight of gun and mounting was only moved by night, but on the occasion when the final move up of the gun to its new position took place, Commander Bickford transported the 12-inch weapon sixteen miles during a single night.

It was a wonderful sight for those who peered from their windows, in their night-caps, in the little village of Ghiveldt. "Old Bick" in drab-coloured fear-nought coat, smothered with gun grease and what not, a rum bottle sticking out of one pocket, (let us hope it was filled with tea); from the other pocket a half loaf of bread, with slabs of meat and chunks of cheese, which comprised his field service larder; dozens of little squashed "Three Castles" cigarettes filling all the odd pocket corners! "Old Bick," who was a great favourite among the Dover destroyer crowd, knew no difference between night and day, he never seemed to sleep. He was quite unable to carry a stock of clothes around, never being in the same place for more than a matter of hours at a time. He had a happy knack of always being exactly on the spot. His men loved him; his chauffeur was a slave to him. And this wicked old Bluebird is actually credited with having killed three chauffeurs in the war. The Foster-Daimler drivers would work their hearts out for their boss, and once a rating had been enrolled in the "Bickford Joy-ride Army," he was lost to civilisation, and whatever unit he belonged to lost touch with him for ever.

Two of the tractors were called "Keep Smiling" and "Here I am," the third one christened itself "Bicky's Baby," although their official designations were really O.H.M.S. "33," "43," and "29."

Incidentally, Bicky is still lost somewhere in France or Belgium in 1919. Long after the war is finished and men have gone back to the soil; long after the French children who greeted him with shouts and cadged his cigarettes have grown up, married and perhaps become mothers, Old Bick is still on the other side. Admiralty clerks in vain scratch their heads and work through piles of papers to trace his whereabouts; Lords of the Admiralty angrily order his withdrawal, but none of their efforts ever trouble Bicky; he has been so lost and submerged in the labyrinth of sand dunes, battered trenches, wrecked lighthouses, broken piers, wayside cafés and decrepit picture palaces, that he has for ever established his position as uncrowned King of Flanders. Expeditions have been sent out in vain to overcome and capture him in his pirate stronghold, officers of proved gallantry and ability have attempted to track him down. Many of them came in contact with him and thought they had got their bird, but no, when safely in their custody, as they foolishly imagined, they found, not Bicky, but only his empty rum bottle.

At the time of writing I have been a month in Ostend and, trading on my friendship, I have made an attempt to secure him. I have collected a few satellites of proved and tried vicious habits to help me capture Bicky, but, like other men who have attempted this vain conquest I have fallen as it were a shapeless, battered mass, for Bicky has grown fatter than ever, and when I rushed him and attempted to capture, for trial, promotion or

honour, he merely fell out of his motor-car and rolled on me. When I recovered, Bicky had left Belgium and re-established himself in one of his pirate haunts on the outskirts of Dunkirk.

It is no good, and as long as life remains in him, this monster will haunt the coast roads of France and Flanders; fortunately, he is a good ghost, and beyond killing chauffeurs, pigs and chickens with his motor-car, he has never been known to say an unkind word, to refuse a drink or to refuse hospitality to any stranded officer or man wearing an Allied uniform. But I must get back to the guns.

During the transport of the heavies, screwing up and wedging frequently had to be resorted to, when the roads gave way, which they often did, and the wheels of the gun trucks sank deeply into the mud they had to be jacked and timbered underneath. The party also had to reinforce bridges to carry the weight.

A little story was told me by Bickford, which I am bound to include here, although it sounds better in the telling than actually in the reading.

Old Bick was celebrating the Armistice at the newly-inaugurated officers' club in Dunkirk. The officer who was running the club, Major Magher, was an old Indian man, and having the Anglo-Indian taste for curry, this dish frequently appeared on the club *ménu*. Old Bick saw the curry and knowing that all the attendant delicacies were available, thanks to Magher, he told the demure little French waitress to bring him some Bombay duck. "*Oui, monsieur,*" the little girl replied, and daintily tripped away, to re-appear presently with a bottle of good wine. Bicky preferred the wine of Scotland to the red wine of the country, but he had not called for

wine; "I didn't ask for this," he exclaimed. "*Mais, oui, monsieur. Regardez,*" ventured the little girl, and pointing to the inscription on the label, added, "*Mais, vraiment. C'est le 'bon Medoc.'*"

But now of the Dominion Battery, as it was eventually christened, owing to the assistance given by members of the Overseas Canadian Railway Construction Corps. The gun was mounted near Adinkerke, in the middle of some fields of the type so familiar to those who knew the peaceful Belgium of pre-war time. Long before the gun was mounted, a dummy barn was constructed over the platform and disguised in futurist colours which made it extremely difficult to distinguish by aerial observation from the homesteads around. It really looked like a portion of the farm Saint Joseph.

It was my privilege to be taken out to this battery when it was nearing its final stages of completion. I had brought the Admiral over in the *Crusader* to inspect the handiwork of the barnacled Bickford and his web-footed companions, who had temporarily forsaken the sea in their eagerness to inflict material damage on the Boches. The sailor loves to get away on detached service where, like Old Bick, he can discard the little niceties of uniform, wear daisies in his hat, smoke to his heart's content whilst working, and generally drift into that state in which Old Bick himself delighted to revel. He certainly never called his men to account for being improperly dressed; how could he?

It was a great picnic for everybody concerned in spite of the hard work entailed and the long hours. It was impossible for German observers to see the gigantic 12-inch gun, for the breech and mounting were covered in by the woodwork of the dummy barn, while the muz-



GERMAN BATTERY "TIRPITZ" BUILT IN 1915.

zle itself was hidden by imitation tiles painted on canvas which could be withdrawn by pulling lines when getting ready for action.

A few Belgian peasants were working in the fields around when I visited the gun in the summer of 1916 and renewed my acquaintance with that original character who figures as the hero of this chapter. I remember how glad I was to see him, and I do not think he had forgotten me after I had picked him off his tripod near Ostend, the year before. Perhaps he had grown a little younger, his smile was broader and his body no more slender; but he was the same tough block of a man who feared nothing and nobody on earth, with the exception of Admiral Bacon. Perhaps Admiral Bacon will be sent out to gather him back to his proper side of the Channel when all other men's attempts have failed.

Everything seemed to go so well and smoothly under Bickford's charge; he had a number of clever and energetic helpers, including two whom I met that day, Major Harvey, of the Canadian Royal Engineers, and Lieut. Flint, belonging to the same Corps. It was the first holiday in the country I had had in the war, and I shall never forget how thoroughly I enjoyed strolling around the grass, flax, beet, and bean fields, that were quite unlike anything to do with hating or war. The gun itself seemed horribly out of place with its poultry yard adjacent. Long-eared Belgian dogs and mangy looking chickens strutted about amongst the large girders which formed the gun platform. Everybody had a broad grin on his face, and the warm rays of the sun streamed down upon us all and gave us a feeling of peace. We were brought back to earth rather suddenly, however, for the day I paid my respects to

the Dominion Battery was after it had done a considerable amount of firing and the Hun had fairly well located its position. Suddenly two huge 11-inch shells flopped down among the beans and beetroot, the mangy chickens fluttered in startled fashion to the shelter of the farm pig-sties, the long-eared dogs looked anxiously at the sailors. The one great being whom we all feared ceased cooking his omelette on the cordite cases, and the mild summer feeling of peace gave place to one of apprehension. Phosphorous smoke was quickly generated, and a dense fog soon blotted out the battery from observation; we, the joy-riders, returned to our cars and sped away, leaving Old Bick to deal as best he could with the very expert German artilleryman who had found him out once more.

The first rounds fired from this gun were loosed off on Dominion Day, September 3rd, 1916. They were two shrapnel shells, which were fired with full charges for the purpose of testing the gun and platform. Unfortunately, the second round, by some mistake, was not one of those which had been gauged for firing; it left the gun, but the head of the shell flew off and the body was hurled through the air, making a noise like an express train as it somersaulted, before eventually breaking up and scattering its fragments over the fair fields of Belgium. A Belgian General brought back the head of the projectile the following day; it had landed in a field three miles away without, I am glad to say, doing any damage. The Belgian General, having satisfied himself that it belonged to the Dominion gun, insisted on retaining it as a souvenir. He wished those at the battery better luck in future and then withdrew.

The subsequent efforts of the Dominion battery left

nothing to be desired. The "Tirpitz" battery was straffed unmercifully, and we have every reason to believe that one of the big naval guns was knocked out and another seriously damaged. We know from prisoners' information that one of these guns burst, but whether it was hitting back at the Dominion battery or firing at the monitor we do not really know. Our information, from Belgian local sources, shows pretty conclusively that the first shell fired by the Dominion gun at the Tirpitz battery caused the destruction of five-and-twenty German soldiers working on the emplacement.

Admiral Bacon frequently visited the naval guns in Belgium, and on the occasion of the first bombardment of the Tirpitz battery, he employed a ruse which may or may not have been successful, but which lacked nothing in originality.

Everything being in readiness with the 12-inch guns at Dominion Camp, an old monitor appeared off the coast, disguised with an extra funnel and in other ways. This ship opened fire with blank rounds, when she was outside the long range of the shore batteries. The exact times for firing the individual rounds had been pre-arranged, and each time that a blank charge was fired from the ship, the 12-inch shore gun fired a real shell. As stated, our 12-inch naval gun ashore was thus able to throw a certain number of shells right into the Tirpitz battery. Our spotting was done from the shore observation stations and confirmed by aeroplane spotting; from the aerial photographs and the Belgian information we learned that this bombardment was successful in destroying the mounting of one gun at least.

Two more 12-inch guns of a slightly, improved pattern, capable of being elevated to 45 degrees, were sub-

sequently handed over to the tender mercies of Commander Bickford and his men for transport and mounting. They were put on board the monitor *General Crauford* at Chatham and carried to Dunkirk, where there were cranes capable of lifting these huge weights; a wooden skid was built from the upper deck of the monitor down to the quayside, the guns themselves were packed round, so that they were cylindrical in shape for the greater part of their length, and then eased down the skids on the quay. Another skid was here fixed up, leading from the quay to the road trucks, and the big guns were taken, one at a time, to their selected positions in Belgium. One of these later guns was used almost entirely for counter battery work against the 15-inch guns at Langenbaum.

In addition to the naval guns already mentioned, three 9.2-inch, mark X, weighing 29 tons, were moved to positions on the sand dunes, and 7.5-inch naval guns were mounted in the vicinity of Nieuport, and finally two mark VIII 9.2-inch 24-ton guns, originally comprising the heavy armament of H.M.S. *Terrible*, were mounted at Oost Dunkirk; these were removed when it was expected that the country would be flooded by the Allies in order to prevent the Germans from advancing further, which they then looked like doing.

The 9.2-inch guns spoken about at the beginning of this chapter, got the highest number of marks for getting nearer the enemy than any other naval gun, for the Germans advanced to within 900 yards of their actual position, and they had a lonely time on one occasion, when their only artillery support was one machine-gun mounted on a sand dune to the rear of them. Old Bick was in no way perturbed; once the decision had been

given to dismount the gun, he rolled up to their emplacement in a Lancia Boxcar tender, with his rum bottle, sandwiches and impedimenta, and established himself with a view to getting busy. The enemy no sooner observed Old Bick's car than they commenced a murderous straffing with 4.1-inch shells, but the car, like Old Bick, had a charmed life, and although 43 shells were squirted at the lonely vehicle, not one succeeded in doing it any injury worth commenting on. Old Bick waited till dusk and then commenced to dig it out of the sand heaps which had been knocked up about it by the exploding shells. During the hours of darkness the marines, who were then manning these guns, constructed a road of sleepers and, four days after they arrived, the two guns were safely withdrawn. The second gun was only got away at daybreak, and those working about it were lucky to escape being shelled, for the enemy, with their military thoroughness, always had an observation balloon out with the first rays of light to report on anything that could be seen moving behind our lines. This day the Hun balloon observer was slightly behind time; the shelling came all right, plastering the roadway just as Old Bick toddled after the retreating muzzle and the whole train of comics disappeared round a friendly corner in the Aeolian Road, which leads to Nieuport and Oost Dunkirk.

These remarks, which are not meant to be historical, would not be complete without a reference to the late Commander H. C. Halahan, D.S.O., who was navally in charge of the bombarding guns and their crews. This officer, who it will be remembered, lost his life at Zeebrugge Mole when he was about to land in charge of the demolition party, inspired his men with confidence, and

ran the naval batteries, which were under the Dover Admiral's command, in a manner which the Admiral officially reported as "deserving of the highest praise."

The scope of this book does not permit me to dwell much on the individual effort of all those who served ashore on the Belgian coast. I have expanded on the subject of Old Bick because his whole character and procedure invited description, for the benefit of those who do not go down to the sea in ships, and only have seen brass-bound sailors in beautiful rigging, adorning such places as the Carlton and Savoy.

Bicky was truly the naval equivalent for Bairnsfather's "Old Bill."

CHAPTER XII

THE R.N.A.S., MORE COAST WATCHING, MINE- LAYING AND SKIRMISHING

“ ? ”

Who is he who lives in Dover,
He who always goes by car,
Even though he only travels
A hundred yards to find a bar?

Beside a shed he's seen on Sundays,
Weirdly clothed and shouting loud.
All his faithful minions round him,
Waiting for a decent crowd.

When the road is black with people,
They open doors which groan and grunt,
Carry forth their wondrous plaything,
Wind it up upon the front.

When the crowd begins to dwindle,
Then they lift it shoulder high,
All the people start to whisper,
“ Do you think he's going to fly? ”

But they're doomed to disappointment,
The bird is put back in its cage,
Doors are shut and barred and bolted,
All have earned their daily wage.

Later on you'll hear his story,
How he had an awful fight,
“ Met a Prussian at six thousand,”
Then you'll realise he's (deleted by censor).

Tells you anti-aircraft Archies,
Smote him with an awful tonk,
Fuller details he will give you
If you say, “ Is yours a Bronk? ”

His imitation naval rig,
Does credit to his tailor.
But still he always must admit,
He's Really Not a Sailor.

Note.—All libel actions in connection with this, or any other poetical efforts, can be settled out of court at eleven a.m. on any day during the next stand off.

“NUBIAN NONSENSE”

THE above is a page from “Nubian Nonsense.” Lieut. John I. Hallett, who perpetrated this dreadful libel on our gallant Air Service, was one of our best young destroyer officers, zealous, full of dash, and gifted with perhaps the liveliest imagination of all in the Dover family. He never feared to say what he wanted to say in his poetry and he sent copies of his poems to all those he slandered. I am afraid during his periods of boiler-cleaning, he had to cool the wrath of those his pen attacked with many an iced “Bronx” cocktail.

Whenever a hostile aeroplane dropped bombs near the *Nubian* during the time she was commanded by Hallett, the bird on the wing was sure to get a rude signal slowly blinked out from the ship’s searchlight. Some of these signals I am quite unable to publish, but of others, “Killed any women and babies lately, Fritz”? “How many hospitals have you bombed”? and “Who bombed the kindergarten”? are more or less typical. Some of these signals the Germans read, for now and again he got what the Hun considered appropriate replies, such as “Cowards, for firing on German trawlers,” “What a mess you made at Heligoland.”

We were unfortunate enough to lose Hallett from the Dover Patrol about halfway through the war; he was appointed away to command a large destroyer, which was to attend on our submarines operating near the

German coasts. He certainly profited by his new appointment, and soon won his D.S.O.

In spite of Hallett's poem, we in the Dover Patrol were quick to recognise the magnificent development of the R.N.A.S. Nothing ever happened on the Dunkirk side in the way of German offensive from the air, without the fiercest of counter attacks. Our fellows were always up, and by 1917 day air attacks by the Germans were nearly a thing of the past. The enemy aeroplanes were literally chased from the skies. There were, of course, the occasional day raids made on London by large squadrons of aeroplanes, when Dover and Ramsgate both got the bombs that were remaining, but after all, what did this amount to? The results, when spread out, did not show much for the year. Our force was not as efficient as that of the Germans in the first three years of the war, but in the last two years our machines were so much better in construction and armament, that with their magnificent *personnel*, the Hun airmen more than found their match.

In the summer of 1917 we re-established the Belgian barrage patrol, and in this year we were almost unmolested. It is true the enemy used their machines to spot and generally observe us on our coast patrol, but they flew to the safety of their aerodromes the moment our own machines were sighted. Occasionally they were cut off, and I remember seeing a very pretty little fight on Sunday, 12th August. An enemy seaplane had shadowed the patrol and wirelessly his observations to the enemy, and at 5.45 p.m. our aeroplane fleet patrol, directed by the ship's gunfire, attacked him and brought him down into the sea. The air fleet patrol was most

efficient and, although we had not enough machines available to keep a constant overhead patrol throughout the long summer days, our aeroplanes had the happy knack of appearing on the scene when their presence was most desired.

Enemy aircraft were fairly frequently brought down. I remember on one occasion watching an air fight when the German was flopped into the sea. I stood up with my division to what I thought was the scene of the combat, but could find no trace of the enemy machine, pilot or observer. Suddenly, however, a small fast single-seater of our own swept down and pirouetted in front of my bow, quite close to the sea. The pilot continually waved his hands towards the east, so off our destroyers sped. Presently we found a wing of the enemy machine just sticking out of the water. I detailed the *Nugent* to pick up the aircraft if possible, which she accordingly did. The pilot was saved, and when he appeared on the deck of the *Nugent*, he looked round and said, "The fellow who brought me down is in the water over there. Will you save him if you can?" We had not observed the downfall of the English machine, owing to a smoke screen which had been put up for a bombardment by the *Terror*. The *Nugent's* boats soon saved the R.N.A.S. pilot, and in a very short time the German and the Englishman were sitting at breakfast in the *Nugent's* wardroom, filling themselves out with poached eggs and exchanging lies in the most approved fashion.

This German was responsible for saving our own man's life, and I hope he has been treated kindly as a prisoner, for from all accounts he was one of those *rarae aves*, a German gentleman.

The barrage patrol of 1917 presented features which

differed only slightly from those of the year before. Our two "centre pieces" were the monitors *Erebus* and *Terror*. They did excellent work, and it might be interesting to note their characteristics. They were of 8,000 tons displacement, 13 knots speed, and burned oil fuel, which was a great blessing to their crews. The main armament was two 15-inch guns and the secondary armament consisted of 4-inch guns, with two 3-inch anti-aircraft, besides some lighter pieces. They carried 305 officers and men each.

The bombarding work done this summer was more or less divided up so that the 15-inch monitors, of which we now had three, carried out the "set shoots," that is, they fired at certain specified targets, such as batteries, harbour works and lock gates, while the 12-inch vessels were employed as supports for the light forces to rally on and for short notice bombardments asked for by the Army. We used smoke screens, which were from time to time improved. The enemy also established smoke screens soon after we got going, and great attention was paid to original ranging in order to get round the enemy smoke screens; that is, the monitors endeavoured to get spotted on the targets before the smoke screen was put up. If they succeeded in doing this, they planted the requisite number of 15-inch shells on their objective and the smoke screen itself was useless. A great deal of trouble was taken to practise the aeroplane observers, and they themselves had to face a good deal in order to spot accurately while under the heavy fire of the German anti-aircraft batteries, with which one might almost say the Belgian coast was infested. Success in the bombardments depended on the ships anchoring in their bombarding position without being seen, and open-

ing fire as quickly as possible before the enemy smoke screens had time to spread. It was also advisable for the aeroplane to use wireless as little as possible before the spotting commenced, and Admiral Bacon impressed on aeroplane spotters that they must be always up to time in order to signal, "Ready to observe," at the pre-arranged time for "Hating."

I am glad to say that Admiral Bacon used the *Broke* a good deal this summer, and he was always most communicative on the subject of preparedness. He frequently impressed on those of us with whom he took passage that we must while away the monotonous patrolling hours by thinking out different situations and contingencies with a view to meeting them quickly and to the best advantage. He was always giving destroyer captains little bits of advice that made for their efficiency and readiness for action.

The enemy never knew when our bombardments were going to take place, and Admiral Bacon had a whole lot of dud signals, which he used to make every morning at the same hour that aeroplanes would leave the aerodrome, to deceive the foe and make them think a bombardment was about to be perpetrated upon them. I cannot exactly remember now whether an aeroplane was actually sent up to hover over Ostend or some other likely objective. The energy of the pilots combined with the ability to climb of the newer machines would have made a visit of this sort a mere nothing to the R.N.A.S. people, and whereas in 1914 one could always see our aeroplanes, from 1917 onwards they actually spotted over Ostend in a reliable manner at a height of 17,000 feet.

I was glad not to be a gunnery lieutenant in a bombard-

ing monitor, for the allowances and corrections that had to be made would have defeated me entirely; wind allowances, angular drift and rotation of earth and the variety of other corrections discussed by the gunnery lieutenants when they came aboard to see the Admiral used almost to give me a headache, while the Admiral and the knuts would never turn a hair. I used to get my own back when I dashed alongside a pier at about 25 knots and lit a cigarette before going full speed astern while the technical experts almost stopped breathing, anticipating a dreadful collision.

The short notice bombardments, which were carried out at the Army's request, usually by a pair of 12-inch monitors, needed less technique. The targets represented coastal areas with certain pre-arranged points as centres. The 12-inch monitors by this time had a nominal maximum range of 21,300 yards, but to ensure spraying the target areas with their 12-inch shells, a greater range than 20,000 yards was rarely put on their sights, for this particular purpose.

The "short notice shoots" were usually carried out from West Deep, unless the weather was misty and ships could creep closer in. The "set shoots" were necessary when any wild shooting might have resulted in killing civilians, such as the inhabitants of Ostend. Short notice bombardments were for straffing German soldiers when reported in the areas indicated by our observers.

After I left the patrol, some of the monitors were fitted to carry 18-inch guns, but before this, by the employment of long-headed shells, a material increase in their gun range was obtained; by fitting a 15-inch shell with an 8 calibre-radius head, an increase of range of about 3,000 yards could be obtained. I believe we got

this idea from the Germans, who were wonderful artillery men.

This is not a technical book, it is not intended to be, and therefore I do not propose to dwell any more on the subject of the monitors' bombardments. I hope and believe that our bombardments were successful in doing material damage and harassing the Hun, but I should very much have liked to see the conditions reversed, and Admiral Bacon placed on the Belgian coast to defend it, and to have the use of the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge as naval bases.

The monitors were a good deal under fire from the shore batteries, as were the other vessels of the patrol, but the enemy thought more of shooting at the slow-moving, heavier ships than of attempting to plunk the more quickly moving destroyers. It was no unusual thing for us to be straddled at a range of 25,000 yards, and the enemy can truly say that this year by day he kept us at arm's length. By night our coastal motor-boats made reconnaissances, and three of them, I remember, lay for three hours within a mile from Zeebrugge Harbour on the 5th August, to note if anything passed in or out during the hours of darkness.

These little C.M.B.'s, as the coastal motor-boats were called, were manned by very dashing young officers, and they sank a beautiful destroyer, G.88, by torpedo on the night of 7-8th April, 1917. It was a cleverly planned little stunt of Admiral Bacon's. He ordered Zeebrugge to be heavily bombed, expecting the destroyers to shove off from the Mole and stand out to sea to escape the bombs. Quite in accordance with his wishes, they did this, and very foolishly anchored their boats when once they were well clear. The C.M.B.'s were

watching for them, and just as the Hun sailors had settled down comfortably for the night, the little motor-boats scuttled past them, each loosing off a torpedo. I believe two of the torpedoes fired reached their targets, one hitting the before-mentioned destroyer amidships and sinking her, while another scored a hit without achieving quite such a success.

The C.M.B.'s were often sent up the barrage by night with the idea of torpedoing any above-water craft or submarines mine-laying in the path of the Belgian coast patrol, but nothing ever developed out of these particular reconnaissances.

As in former years, we had our friends the drifters along with us, working on the mine nets and keeping them intact and dangerous. German destroyers frequently attempted to bombard the drifters, but since they seldom came within 14,000 yards of the mine barrage, no damage was inflicted, that I ever heard of, in 1917.

German auxiliary craft, probably mine-sweeping trawlers, were frequently sighted, and it generally fell to the lot of destroyers to fire a few rounds at them before they got out of range. It is probable that these craft did the damage to the mine nets, which we found tampered with soon after they were laid. On one occasion the *Faulknor* (Commander Harry Oliphant), struck these mine nets near dawn, and a section exploded, blowing a big hole in his destroyer. The cynics of the Dover Patrol declared he would not get into trouble when the matter reached the ears of the authorities because they would be so glad to hear that the mine nets were really dangerous. There is a good deal in this, much more than meets the eye, for as I have said elsewhere, we never feared English mines, and it was really

not until 1917 that our mines became dangerous to friend and foe.

The Belgian barrage in 1917 was reinforced with a type of mine unpleasant to come up against; but the description of mine-laying by larger mine-layers is unnecessary; it has already been given for 1916, and after all, the operation of mine laying merely consists in tipping them over the stern.

We had a very bright sample of officer attached to our patrol in the person of Lieut.-Commander Henry Forrester, D.S.C., who commanded the mine-laying destroyer *Meteor*. He was absolutely without fear, and I personally had more to do with Forrester than with many of the other junior officers commanding ships of the Dover Patrol. In 1917 particularly, I used to escort him to a position near the Thornton Ridge, where we had established a zero mark buoy, from which he worked to lay his lines of forty mines or so. A description of one night will do for all.

The barrage patrol would withdraw at dusk; the vessels would anchor in Dunkirk Roads, or to the northward of the bank which protects the roads, according to the state of tide for the night. A couple of hours before high water, the *Meteor* would take station abeam of the commanding flotilla leader and a little procession would form up to accompany her to the zero point from which she worked to get into position for laying. The flotilla leader, with her following of modern destroyers, would screen the *Meteor* up to the Thornton Ridge, or to whatever zero point had been decided on, and then, if no enemy vessels were met with, "g" would be flashed from Forrester's ship, and he would proceed independently over to the prescribed position where his mines



A "TIRPITZ" 11-INCH GUN.

would be deposited. Personally, I loved these night mine-laying stunts; I had grown tired of seeing the enemy on the horizon and never being able to close him, on account of our mine barrage, but night time brought such boundless possibilities. A new division of destroyers might come from Wilhelmshaven to join the Flanders flotilla; a destroyer might be met with, intent on bombarding Lowestoft, Aldborough, or some other fishermen's home; small "A" class T.B.D.'s might be met with, or even enemy trawlers: a chance of a scrap we always looked forward to, and our *personnel* was splendid. I frankly admit that German gunnery was pretty advanced but they never profited sufficiently by it, and they were not out to fight. Our fellows certainly were intent on fighting, and if I have any criticism to make in this little volume on our own sailors, it is that they treated the war as a football match, rather than a contest of brains.

Whenever I accompanied Forrester and his *Meteor* I felt a thrill of pride run through me, for this little red-faced man must have crossed and re-crossed the German minefields on almost every occasion when he took his *Meteor* up the coast. His work was splendid, and I shall never forget the feeling of apprehension which crept over me when I saw the little *Meteor* disappearing into the darkness. The impression left on my mind was a cloud of black smoke, a phosphorescent wake and a tin kettle full of men who were keen as mustard; then the period of suspense—an hour, possibly two. We knew her speed; we knew the position in which the mines were to be laid and we therefore anticipated to within five minutes the instant of her re-appearance. It all comes back to me so vividly. The bow wave reported by the look-out, the quickly-flashed challenge and ac-

knowledge, the feeling of relief and the signal, "Speed 20 knots," flashed by the lamp which only showed in the direction decided on; the dark shape of the *Meteor* as she took station abeam of the *Broke*, and we swirled away homeward to our anchorage off Dunkirk. We always hoped to meet the enemy, but that privilege was denied us, and I feel that privilege will for ever be denied us now that Peace terms specify such a reduction of German armaments. We can hardly hope ever to meet them again.

Little Forrester was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his services; I think he also got the Croix de Guerre, and I hope he will receive some other recognition; he certainly deserves the best that can be given.

Apropos of night mine-laying, the C.M.B.'s, under Lieut. Harrison, did some splendid work. These diminutive high-speed craft, which only drew a few inches of water, used to place mines in all kinds of unexpected positions, and their efforts certainly met with success. It was actually not until the end of 1917 that their mine-laying stunts commenced, but they were all worked in conjunction with the mine-laying from destroyers. We on the coast did a lot of cheerful "hating," whenever we had time to spare, and that was fortunately seldom. The Dover destroyer birds were a hard-working, sea-keeping lot and, without any wish to criticise, moan or complain, I think perhaps we did not appreciate sufficiently the services of the colonels, captains, dames D.N.T. O.'s, majors and people of all sorts, kinds and descriptions, who hauled in C.B.'s, C.M.G.'s, and C.B.E.'s like mackerels on a trailing line for practically civil services, while we carried out the multifarious duties assigned from time to time to the dirty little vessels

attached to the Dover Patrol. The "Hates" were merely occasional, and they usually were consequent upon one night too many at sea. Now that one can look back on the war in a light which shows things in a more or less correct perspective, one realises that there must be a good deal of give and take. I for one, have always, felt that those in Admiralty offices, for the most part, did their utmost to work for those at sea; it is true that they inflicted all kinds of inventions upon us, but there was much in their devilish devices when properly employed. I do not know who invented the C.M.B., but this little vessel was a masterpiece of ingenuity, so much so that I almost wept with envy when I saw the first of them go over from Dover to Dunkirk; I longed to be a lieutenant or a sub, again, for however I may be laughed at, I have once been guilty of suggesting to Admiral Bacon that I should go with Commander Victor Campbell to Zeebrugge and attempt to blow up a Hun destroyer with a Canadian canoe, loaded with the destructive charge we had in use in 1916. We probably would have pulled it off, but "Fred Karno" took no chances.

I have no doubt that many people in this war think they have not been properly awarded; my bravest action during four and a half years of "hating," consisted of telling Admiral Bacon and his Chief-of-Staff that they were called "Fred Karno" and "Hindenburg" respectively. The inventor of these pseudonyms was one Acting Commander R. H. B. Hammond Chambers, another local wit, who rivalled Lieut. Hallett for the position of jester-in-chief to the gutter-snipe navy.

September, 1917, found me the senior destroyer officer, for my friend Peck left the *Swift* to command the cruiser *Diana* just about this time, and some new blood

was injected into the patrol. We were fortunate in obtaining the services of Commander Graham Edwards and one or two others of his stamp, who were certainly an acquisition to our little fighting force. The *Botha* rejoiced under the leadership of this officer who, apart from being a very brave man, possessed a sense of humour and a facility for acting funny that would have put lines of envy on George Robey and Harry Tate. I remember once meeting Edwards in Dunkirk, after I had been promoted to the exalted rank of post captain in His Majesty's naval service. We had both been up to see the Commodore, and having received our orders for execution on the morrow, we repaired on board the *Broke* to partake of a little gin. The destroyer *Mentor* was lying alongside; she had tied up to the *Broke* in my absence. Edwards and I were full of beans, and our kindly instincts turned to those in the little ship, for we now possessed spacious cabins with glorious Chilean messtraps, splendid head-room, while from the ceilings of the *Broke's* and *Botha's* captains' cabins depended silver plated chandeliers that would have put the tawdry decorations of the Berlin "Palais de Dance" to shame. Viva Chile!

We had one gin each and then we collected the "Mentors." It will be remembered that this ship, in the preceding April, had towed the *Broke* away from a burning enemy destroyer which was in imminent danger of blowing up; the opportunity was not to be missed; nothing was too good for the "Mentors."

Edwards, who had a louder voice than even I myself possessed, descended into the destroyer's wardroom with a terrific and war-like whoop, and invited all and sundry to board my flotilla leader. Those in the *Mentor's*

ward-room, seeing Commander Edwards and knowing the *Botha* to be in the harbour, naturally imagined that it was his ship they were alongside, the two vessels being exactly similar. I, myself, was arrayed in a burberry waterproof, buttoned round my neck, and not being recognised as the destroyer king-at-arms of the day, the Artificer Engineer pressed me to have a gin. I did so, and freely accepted his hospitality, while Edwards, divesting himself of some of his clothes, gave an excellent music-hall performance which he described as "Les Arabes." It consisted of wild whoops, can-can dances, acrobatic feats and comic songs in jargon French imitation; this very creditable, or disgraceful, exhibition pleased the "Mentors" no end; they applauded him to the skies, loaded him with honours in the shape of Gold Flake cigarettes, photographs and souvenirs, and finally repaired to my cabin in the *Broke* to partake of a sardine supper. By this time Edwards had forgotten whether the *Broke* was his ship or the *Botha*; he was an inimitable host, and his host-like instincts caused him to take charge. He ordered drinks and provided food; he bullied my cook and coxswain into a speed and efficiency in waiting they had never attained under me and, in short, he thoroughly rose to the occasion and gave the "Mentors" the time of their lives.

Commander Edwards, of the *Botha*, was known in the Dover Patrol as "Farver," and he is credited with having led two destroyer divisions into action with the signal, "Follow father at 25 knots," flying from his mast-head. "Farver" is one of the characters of the British Navy. If he is on leave in England and he sees anything wearing the uniform of a sailor or a marine, he cannot

resist the temptation of going up and speaking to him. He is often kept at arm's length for a second or two, but his personality is so fascinating, his manner so comic, and his figure so ridiculous, that the thickest ice is quickly broken and "Farver" enlists another recruit in the army of his admirers. "Farver" is irresistible.

It is rather curious that, although his war services have been first class, his adventures many, his blunders none, "Farver" only possesses two decorations—the Legion of Honour and the Croix de Guerre. Of all the Allied countries, only France has recognised him, but "La Belle France" has handed out to Edwards everything she can give. Let us hope some other nation will follow in her footsteps.

I am glad to say that this year I was brought into very close contact with the French vessels and their captains. We usually had three Frenchmen patrolling with us, and very good they were. In 1917 I generally took out three or four of the following:—*Francis Garnier, Obusier, Bouclier, Enseigne Roux, Magon, and Capitaine Mehl.*

The French destroyer captains were full of pluck, keen, skilful and daring. They manœuvred splendidly, and supported the British destroyers in a way that excited our greatest admiration. I hope I shall be pardoned if I tell of a little meeting in the wardroom of the *Broke*.

We were about to carry out a "Meteor" mine-laying operation, rather more complicated than usual. I had explained my plans, which had been discussed by all the captains present. One Frenchman, with a long, fair moustache, looked very serious throughout, and a certain English commander, whose name I dare not

mention, sat with a face like a scrubbed hammock right through the discussion. When it was over and everything settled, "Scrub-'ammick" turned to the serious Frenchman and said, "*Aimez-vous les femmes?*" The reply came out pat, "*Je les adore,*" and the meeting broke up in disorder.

I had the honour of carrying the French Vice-Admiral Ronarch, together with Admiral Bacon, when the British and French naval forces made their début on the Belgian coast in 1917, on the occasion of the re-establishment of the mine barrage, which was laid, as previously described, to harass the enemy submarines using the Belgian coast ports. The two Admirals slept the night on board after having a little dinner-party in the captain's cabin on the *Broke*, which I attended. The senior naval officer at Dunkirk, Captain Bowring, Chief of our Staff, and the Admiral's flag lieutenant, were present at the dinner, and about 1 a.m. we moved away to the appointed rendezvous for the mine layers and their escorts.

At dawn we sighted two enemy destroyers and the *Broke* being nearest to them, dashed in to the attack. They at once retired, when we loosed off our four guns, firing ahead at them, and the *Broke* went towards the drifters re-laying mine nets. The Hun destroyers commenced playing at "Tom Tiddler's ground," and their numbers presently increased, but they were not out to fight that day, only to observe, unless we gave them a chance to strafe the little fishing-boats, which we had no intention of doing.

I may say that on this occasion the *Broke* carried a cinema operator, and also among our passengers was Captain Distin Maddick, O.B.E., who was making a series of films for propaganda work. I regret that he

missed the little destroyer brush, as it was quite a pretty sight with their shells falling fairly close. Later on in the year we had evidence that destroyers were more numerous in the German coast ports.

On the 27th October an attack was made on the *Botha* and her destroyer division, first by one enemy seaplane and then by about seventeen enemy aircraft, flying from about 4,000 feet. This air attack was the only properly organised one the destroyers had to contend with. Our anti-aircraft fire had the effect of breaking up the enemy formation, but bombs were dropped very close to the ship. Two men in the *Botha* and four in the French destroyer *Magon* were slightly wounded, and a very small hole was made in the *Magon's* side on the water line, by a splinter.

The enemy destroyers evidently were working in conjunction with the aeroplanes, hoping to demoralise our fire during the bomb-dropping interval. A couple of hits were obtained on the enemy by the *Botha*, after which he withdrew. The Germans repeated this on the following day, when nine aircraft attacked the *Kempenfeldt's* divisions subsequent to an enemy destroyer attack, but they grew tired of this and used their aeroplanes for bombing towns at night—a more profitable amusement and less dangerous to themselves.

On the 10th October, the *Broke* sighted a submarine and fired at her, but she dived before we could come close.

At the end of October, the enemy submarines laid mines across the track of the coast patrol, and in this month we had evidence that enemy submarines crossed the Belgian Coast barrage. From this time they appear to have made certain passages through, and I regret to

say our mine barrage no longer deterred them from entering the Channel.

The Belgian Coast barrage had certainly been of use, for it is commonly known that German submarines, for a year or so, generally forsook the Channel route and travelled north-about.

I might mention here a little fight we had in the *Broke* on October 1st. We had just come over from Dover and, joining up with the patrol, which was then returning to its anchorage, the *Terror* ordered us to place a light buoy in a certain position to the south of the Thornton Ridge. As we were likely to be stopped while laying and lighting the buoy, I asked the flotilla leader on patrol to send me a couple of destroyers as escort, but on our way up we passed several floating mines and I signalled to the two T.B.D.'s, *Mentor* and *Moorsom*, to stop and sink the mines. We went along to the appointed position and found waiting for us four large and two small enemy destroyers in the direction of Zeebrugge. My broadside was only three guns against the enemy's sixteen, but I had too much pride to run away with the *Broke* after her channel scrap. I quickly decided to turn away and lead them close up to the mine barrage. As there were six of them, I hoped they would follow a single flotilla leader, when I should have turned round and gone straight for them, firing my four guns ahead. But they remained where they were, stopped and steaming slow, so I turned round and went for them bald-headed, firing as rapidly as possible and noting the fall of shell. We were joined by the *Mentor* and *Moorsom*, but our smoke prevented them from opening fire until we got right up to the mine barrage, which, of course, I could not cross. Two hits were

reported by the range-taker, but it is always very difficult to spot hits in a destroyer scrap, for everybody is firing, and in our navy we are no different from other navies—all our geese are swans.

The enemy did not wait for all three of us to engage them, and when we got up to the barrage they retired behind a smoke screen, not to re-appear that day. I sent the two destroyers to continue sinking mines, and fixed up the light buoy we were sent out to lay, then, in order that there should be no undue lying or exaggeration on the part of the Germans, I lowered a whaler in charge of Sub.-Lieut. Peppé. He lit the buoy and pulled about while we, hoping that this bait would attract the Hun, waited for developments. Everybody laughed at the sub-lieutenant abandoned in this manner, but the destroyers might have held a regatta for the interference from the enemy would certainly have been *nil*. I should like to have seen the Germans lower boats in full view of Harwich or Dover. The *Vossische Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, or *Lokal Anzeiger* would have had half a column on the cowardice of our sailors, had they been able to do so. We were quite certain that the enemy had not interfered with our buoy, for we steamed back during the night and laid some mines, and although we hung about for a couple of hours, not an enemy ship was seen.

During this summer we were attacked by a new form of torpedo, for it practically amounted to this. On the 3rd October, at 9.20 a. m., an electrically controlled motor-boat was seen approaching the patrol. The destroyers and light craft fired on her and recorded a hit, which considerably reduced her speed. Eventually she was hit by the pom-pom shells fired from the destroyer *North Star*, and shortly afterwards she sank. Apparently the

working of this device was controlled by a spotting seaplane, who wirelessly directed to the shore controlling station.

On the 22nd October, just after nine o'clock in the morning, the *Erebus* sighted an electrically-controlled motor-boat nine miles north of Ostend, heading straight for the patrol, but the monitors, turning away, lost sight of her and no real attack took place. On one occasion the electrically-controlled motor-boat actually hit the monitor *Erebus*. There was a terrific explosion, but as it struck the monitor's bulge, no very great damage was done. The captain was wounded in the face, and the *Erebus* had several casualties. The principal damage to the ship was to the electrical circuits, with which the explosion played "old Harry."

The mine-sweepers during this summer did very excellent work, and the patrol did not suffer on account of enemy mine-laying.

The air raids on Dunkirk this year were worse than ever. When the destroyers were anchored off the port we had a good view of the enemy bombing raids. It really did not seem that they could continue without the annihilation of every living person in this French seaport. On moonlight nights, almost continuously from darkness until dawn, one would hear the dismal hooting of the old Sandettie Light vessel, which, moored in the docks, used her fog signal as an air raid warning. We christened it "Mournful Mary," and Mary certainly mourned to some tune. There is no doubt Dunkirk suffered, but the *sang-froid* of the inhabitants left nothing to be desired; after a most dreadful series of air raids, to an outsider the inhabitants appeared to be perfectly unruffled. Dug-outs were constructed and preparations

made for the protection of the military and civil population, but nevertheless there were many casualties, for 1917 was the year of 500-pound bombs, which could not fail to kill. Later on I became flag captain to Admiral Bacon and, sitting in his office at Dover, I frequently had cause to telephone Dunkirk. I admired Commodore Lynes and his secretary, Paymaster Lieut. J. Mc. L. More who were so frequently bombed that I got quite accustomed to hearing, "Would you mind speaking a little louder as there is an air raid on. There is rather a noise this end."

The Commodore and his staff had to put up with a good deal, and they must have been men of wonderful physique to continue working as they did under almost impossible conditions.

This year we had one or two misfortunes. One of our torpedo boats, No. 24, was wrecked off Dover break-water on the 28th January. The *Ghurka* was sunk by a mine to the westward of Dover Strait, and we lost a good little fellow in her skipper, Lieut.-Commander Woolcombe-Boyce. A good many men were lost on this occasion; Lieut.-Commander Lewin, the gunnery officer of the Sixth Flotilla, happened to be on board when the *Ghurka* struck a mine, and it was thanks to his gallantry that several of the crew were saved. Lewin, after the accident, seized a Kisbie life-buoy, and by his efforts kept afloat several men, who all held on to the life-buoy until they were picked up by a trawler. Lewin set a splendid example by insisting that the seamen should be taken on board first, although he had been a long time swimming in the cold, rough sea.

We also lost the *Myrmidon* from the same cause. The *Zulu* hit a mine near Calais on one occasion, but she

was skilfully kept afloat, thanks to the seamanlike qualities displayed by her commanding officer, Lieut. John Brooke, and the engineer officer of the *Nubian*. Eventually the *Zulu* was brought to England, minus her stern. Some happy wag conceived the idea of joining the stern part of the *Nubian* on to the bow half of the *Zulu*, for the sake of economy in construction. It will be remembered that the *Nubian* was struck in the enemy destroyer raid in October, 1916. The idea materialised, and the joined together portions subsequently appeared in the Dover Patrol under the somewhat un-naval name of *Zubian*.

The Sixth Flotilla, during 1917, were as follows:—
LIGHT CRUISERS.—*Adventure, Active*.

FLOTILLA LEADERS.—*Faulkner, Swift, Broke, Botha, Marksman*.

TRIBALS.—*Afridi, Amazon, Ghurka, Crusader, Viking, Nubian, Zulu, Cossack, Tartar, Mohawk, Saracen, Kempenfelt*.

THIRTY-KNOTTERS.—*Greyhound, Mermaid, Leven, Fawn, Kangaroo, Syren, Gipsy, Racehorse, Crane, Falcon*.

TORPEDO BOATS FOR DOWNS PATROL.—*T.B.24, T.B.15*.

SMALL MONITORS.—*M.23, M.21, M.24, M.25, M.26, M.27*.

"L" CLASS.—*Laertes, Lance, Laverock, Lark, Lochinvar, Lucifer, Lydiard, Lawford, Linnet, Landrail, Llewellyn, Laforey, Laurel, Liberty*.

All "L" class had left the patrol by July, except *Laforey*, sunk 23d May, 1917, when we had the following "M" class in their stead:—

"M" CLASS.—*Mentor, Meteor, Melpomene, Mor-*

ris, Mastiff, Myngs, Miranda, Matchless, Nugent, Milne, Manley, Mansfield, Minos, North Star, Murray, Phoebe, Moorsom.

LARGE DESTROYERS ORIGINALLY BUILT FOR TURKEY.
—*Termagent, Trident.*

PATROL BOATS.—*P.11, P.17, P.21, P.24, P.49, P50.*

CHAPTER XIII

KNUTS AND GOLD

On our "days off" in the destroyer service it often fell to our lot to carry monarchs, potentates and politicians, as their services were required and dispensed with, from time to time, by the various Allied nations.

I sometimes carried the whole Cabinet about in the *Viking*, and the Chief of the General Staff usually accompanied the ministers and all important missions. Occasionally these were accompanied by lady secretaries, who were full of news and whose presence in itself offered a change to the monotony of the tedious patrol. There is nothing like the sight of a pretty girl to cheer up the war-weary sailor.

The proudest day for the *Crusader* was on the occasion of a visit by King Albert and Queen Elizabeth to the Belgian Coast flotilla. Their Majesties, with the Princess José, Prince Leopold and Prince Charles, came on board the *Crusader* and were taken out into Dunkirk Roads, where they boarded the monitor *Terror*, to see over the latest addition to our bombarding squadron. The *Terror* was a really efficient monitor of 14 knots speed with two modern 15-in. guns. Captain C. W. Bruton took the Royal Party over his ship and Queen Elizabeth took many photographs. Bruton gave us an excellent lunch and King Albert inspected the ship's com-

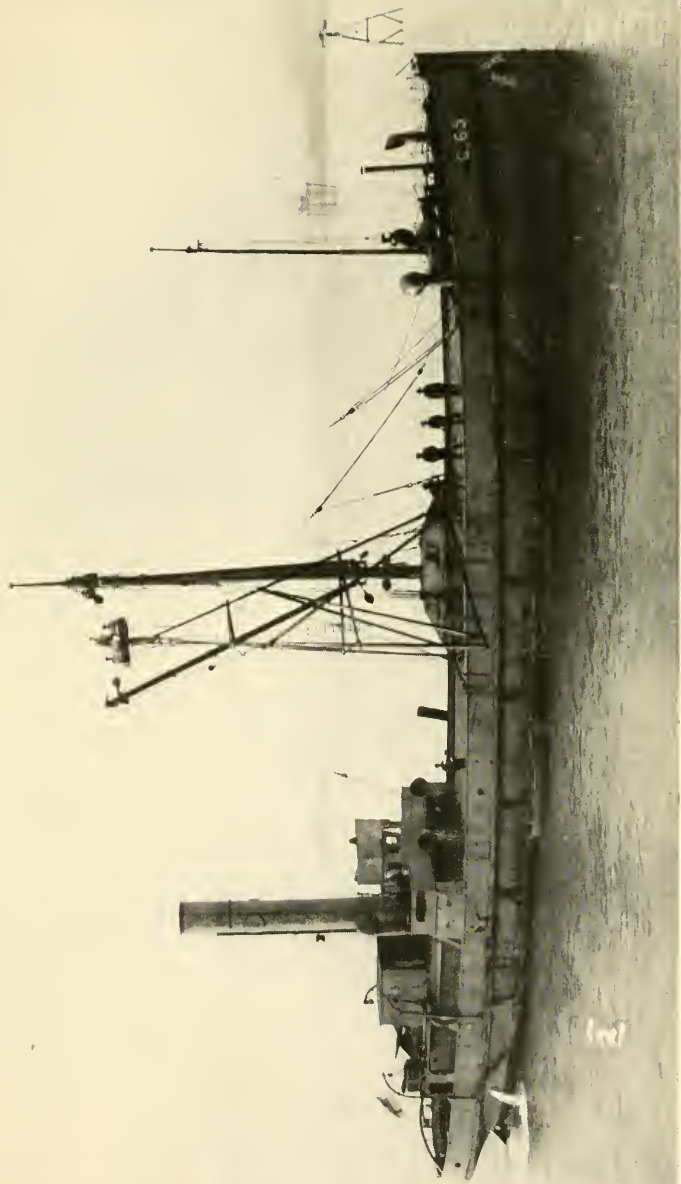
pany. The *Crusader* then took the Royal Party back to Dunkirk, where other vessels were visited.

It was in an English destroyer, the *Amazon*, that the King and Queen crossed over to England on their first visit after the occupation of Belgium by the enemy.

The *Crusader* had the honour four times of taking charge of the escort which guarded His Majesty King George on his visits to France. The Prince of Wales crossed on the same ship on his return from Italy, and Mr. Lloyd George made almost a habit of crossing with me. I shall probably be hanged for telling the following story about the Prime Minister:—

Whilst commanding the *Broke* in 1917, I was sent to Calais to embark £5,000,000 worth of bullion, and my instructions were not to leave until an escort force arrived and reported off the harbour. It was blowing a northeasterly gale, accompanied by rain. The gold was all on board, much of it stowed in my cabin, and I had gone down below to get my lunch whilst waiting to shove off.

Suddenly the Quarter-Master appeared in the doorway, his oilskins dripping with wet. "There is somebody wants to see you, sir, out on the wharf." I replied, "What does he look like? Is he an officer?" "No sir." "Is he a gentleman?" "I don't know about that sir, but he seems to know you, because he asked for Captain Evans." Whoever it was, I thought I had better go up. Sticking up my coat collar, I went out into the wet, and the dripping Quarter-Master pointed to a sentry box. I climbed down the ship's side and made my way to it, and there I found, huddled together, Lloyd George, General Robertson, and Sir Maurice Hankey. They asked me if I could give them some



THE TRIPOD SECURED FOR PASSAGE—READY TO PLACE ON SHALLOW SAND BANK TO SPOT FOR
BOMBARDING MONITORS ON BELGIAN COAST.

shelter, which of course I did; it turned out that the cross-channel steamer which had been sent for the Premier had been delayed, owing to the bad weather, and as it had not yet arrived, I suggested to the Premier that I should take him over with me, and to this he consented. I apologised for having to wait a little until my escort, which had now been signalled, approached and, leading the way into my cabin, I offered the party refreshment.

They gazed in some surprise at the hundreds of little green bags packed close together on the cabin floor, and asked whatever they were. I explained the nature of their contents, and the Prime Minister, with a twinkle in his eye, asked if I trusted him in my cabin. I laughingly replied that I had better *say* that I did anyhow. We sat down to a meal and then I went on the bridge and took my ship out of the harbour. We passed into a terrific sea and were soon washing down.

On arrival at Dover, I saw my three distinguished passengers on to the special train and then proceeded to change into dry clothes. The gold was passed up and loaded into the railway trucks that awaited it. The Bank of England representative took charge of it, but found that there was one bag short. He explained this to me, and I laughingly received the intelligence, whereat he mildly insinuated that I was rather casual. I replied, "Not at all, I have no financial responsibility in this matter." Without losing our tempers we argued for some little time, and I pointed out that the Admiralty had decided no longer to pay commanding officers the percentage to which they were entitled for carrying bullion, and their Lordships stated that we would not be financially responsible for its loss.

But the representative obviously did not believe me;

he was a very nice man, and he evidently thought that I had a "fox behind my ear," as the Norwegians say. Then he asked me if anyone had visited the place where the gold was kept. I said, "There were three men in my cabin, but they have gone away now. They carried suitcase-cases with them." Did I know who they were, asked the B.O.E.R. "Well, I know one was called George, but I don't think this concerns me now." The B.O.E.R. looked at me as if to say, "Well you're a quaint fellow to have charge of £5,000,000 and a beautiful ship of war." Then I offered him some tea and suggested he should count the money again. I was absolutely confident that my organisation for guarding and tallying this money was perfect, and I really did not feel that any had been lost.

The tally was carefully compared again, and I am glad to say the money was correct. I do not think I should have been promoted if I had lost Lloyd George and £5,000,000 in that crossing, and I very much doubt, if I had lost one bag, whether my services would have been retained in His Majesty's Navy.

I am glad to say I did not make many "bricks" as far as the conduct of my ship was concerned, but of all *faux pas* that man ever made, perhaps the following was the worst. In December, 1915, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Balfour, and I believe, Mr. Churchill came on board the *Viking* to cross from Dover to Calais. The night was very dark, and before I shoved off I settled them all in comfortable corners, where they could not get wet, for this passage I proposed to make at 30 knots.

Several secretaries and others accompanied the ministers; I got these stowed away as well, with the

exception of one whom I found on the gangway whilst making my way on to the bridge. I could not see his face, but I didn't want him to get wet, and so I said, "Will you come up on the bridge, you will get wet if you stand there." The tall stranger replied that he would like very much to come on the bridge, and I led him up, gave him a watch-keeping coat, and glancing aft to see that all was clear, gave the order to slip.

In a few seconds my destroyer was speeding out of harbour, writhing and plunging as she made her way across the Dover Strait. When she was clear of the traffic line and steadied on her course for Calais, I opened a conversation with the tall stranger standing on my bridge, high above everything else, where there were no lights to dazzle my eyes as I coned by little vessel.

"You have a pretty rough time on destroyers here, I imagine," said the stranger.

"Yes, I suppose we do," I replied, "but nothing to write home about," and I added, "We have a much better time in these big Tribals than in the thirty-knotters, which are nearly dropping to pieces. However, I suppose the Admiralty have nothing better to give us to patrol the Dover Strait."

The tall stranger, who seemed quite a decent sort of bloke, replied, "No, one can't get a destroyer for love or money now; they are so badly needed for the Grand Fleet flotillas."

Conversation drifted from destroyers to bigger ships, and thence to the subject of the Admiralty. I was very outspoken and frank in all I said, and began to analyse the Board of Admiralty. I remember well saying "I am glad Admiral Oliver is there. He is a very level-headed man and perfectly straight."

The tall stranger said, "Oh! yes, I like Oliver, do you?" and I replied, "Yes, I believe in him implicitly." "So do I," said the tall stranger. I peered at him in the darkness and asked, "Do you know Admiral Oliver?" and the tall stranger replied, "Yes, he is one of my men." I laughed and said, "What do you mean? One of your men! Are you at the Admiralty?" "Yes," he said.

My curiosity was aroused. "Who are you?" I asked. "I am the First Sea Lord," said the tall stranger, and I realised that I was talking to Admiral Sir Henry Jackson. He laughed and said, "You have taught me quite a lot."

Mr. Churchill, as First Lord, occasionally crossed by destroyer. I personally, always welcomed him because he was interesting to talk to and because he was so absolutely pro-Navy. Never in my life have I met such an enthusiast for the naval service as Mr Churchill was, and I hope I will be pardoned if I mention a little incident connected with one of these crossings.

I had been doing a good deal of hard patrol work in the *Viking* and during the time my ship was supposed to be in harbour, I had been frequently called on to carry officials across the channel. The "Vikings" were a good tempered lot, and we felt that it was probably necessary for us to work like this, although we could not understand why cabinet ministers did not use the ordinary cross-channel steamers more.

My sub. and I were waiting with the other officers to receive the First Lord on board, but where we were going we did not know. Presently he appeared out of the special train, close to where we lay alongside the Admiralty Pier and, quickly walking on board, Mr. Churchill looked at me and said, "Boulogne, please." The sub. had a red flag in his hand for use as a signal in case the

propellers got fowled. Very promptly he stuck the flag up into the air, brought it down quickly and made a noise like a bell. He looked straight at Winston Churchill and said, "Taxi, 8d." Everybody roared with laughter, including Mr. Churchill himself, and then my sub. went down and gave the First Lord some tea.

I think Mr. Churchill got his own back in our ward-room. He took a cup of tea, real destroyer tea such as no self-respecting person would drink; he lifted the cup to his lips, took one sip and put it down on the table; looking at the sub. he exclaimed, "Delicious tea!" The sub. had by this time taken a mouthful himself, and realising that it had been standing a very long time, he blushed with shame and brought our guest a whiskey and soda.

It twice came my way to carry Admiral Jellicoe on board my ship to visit the Dover Patrol. He always had a warm spot in his heart for the Dover destroyers, and I was quite glad when he told Admiral Bacon to send in a destroyer despatch every six months. The first time that Lord Jellicoe took passage was in early spring; he visited all parts of the patrol and saw our destroyers and monitors on their various stations, keenly vigilant, and always ready to fight to the uttermost with what must be admitted to be merely "bows and arrows" compared to the weapons of the ships of the Grand Fleet he had recently commanded.

I always wished for one chance such as *we* afforded to enemy attack, with our spread out patrols, which extended for one hundred miles off the Belgian coast to Beachy, and I told this to the Admiral. It was good to have Lord Jellicoe on board, all to oneself as it were, and not belonging to any of the cliques that were pro-this

man and anti-that, and I derived great pleasure from the association that his cruises in my destroyers afforded me.

The Admiral appreciated from his first visit how men worked in Dover. The seamen with their years of anxious patrols were more at sea than any other part of the Navy, if taken from start to finish of the war. The stokers, working it is true under more sheltered conditions, never stopped their toiling, for when we were boiler-cleaning they were forced to continue, and had it not been for the fact that the thirty-knotters were so old that they were almost dropping to pieces and often were broken down, their stokers could never have continued at the high pressure running exacted by the general scheme of patrol. Admiral Jellicoe appreciated all these things, and at last the patrol services got to be recognised. For the last two years of the war, every six months a patrol service despatch was published, and a proportion of one per cent received recognition. In the Dover Patrol this meant, however, that no destroyer man, if recommended for promotion, would be put forward for honour, but before that very little indeed had come our way for a long time. Admiral Jellicoe's visit certainly changed matters. For the first two years of the war, Dover destroyers were given one D.S.O. and one D.S.C.

During the war, many men and officers in the Dover destroyers spent over 700 nights at sea, which might well be taken as parallel service to that in the front line trenches. Some of us did nearer 800 nights, and still kept merry and bright; whilst others were not so strong and gave way under the continual strain after a short year's work.

Leave, when it came our way, was greedily appreciated. It was bad luck that the day after *Crusader* was bombed and arrived at Portsmouth to refit, and her crew thoroughly tired out had happily turned in with no cares on earth in the safety of that protected harbour, that the only Zeppelin raid on Portsmouth Harbour took place. Thus was our first night spoilt, out of the scanty ten days we got.

But I am drifting. These things may be interesting enough in their way, although they take me away from my subjects, which was about the "knuts" we carried. Lord Kitchener, Sir Douglas Haig, and generals galore took passage in our Dover craft, while ambassadors, ministers, dukes, admirals and democrats, who had to be pandered to and patted, constantly persuaded the Admiralty to send them across the channel in a "special destroyer." Some of them were men we took our hats off to and some were not. One First Lord of the Admiralty appeared not to know the difference between the Admiral and the station-master who awaited him on Dover Pier. Of all the people I personally took over, some returned my humble hospitality; it was Mr. McKenna who gave all the *Viking's* officers a gin and bitters in the restaurant car of his special train. Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Douglas Haig gave me a lunch at Calais, and they were two who mattered.

In 1917, I took Admirals Jellicoe, Oliver and Bacon, of the Royal Navy, and Admiral Mayo, of the United States Navy, to Dunkirk and thence along the Belgian coast to witness a bombardment of Ostend. The *Terror* had arranged to commence her firing at 3.30 p.m. She actually fired her first 15-inch shell at 3.2 p.m. Admiral Jellicoe asked me what would happen next and I replied,

"In ten minutes' time the Huns will fire back," for we knew that it took them ten minutes to get their heavy gun batteries going. Sure enough, at 3.12 p.m. a shell whistled and tore through the air, to fall two hundred yards or so ahead of us.

The first lieutenant was standing on the fore-castle talking to two American officers attached to Admiral Mayo's staff. One of the officers, seeing the huge splash made by the falling shell, turned to the sub. and said, "How far do you think that shell fell from this ship?" "About 50 yards," replied the sub. The two American officers looked at one another and then back to the sub. who began to feel uncomfortable, in that he had much underestimated the distance from the danger, but he was soon put at his ease, for the younger American said, "I guess that will have whittled down to five yards before I get home to Philadelphia."

The Admirals were all interested in the bombardment which the *Terror* carried out; it was all very spectacular with the white smoke made by the motor launches, the slow movement of the great gun muzzle as the monitor trained her turrets necessary for firing, the circling aeroplanes keeping off hostile aircraft from approaching to spot for the enemy batteries; the long line of patrolling destroyers ready to pounce on an electrically controlled motorboat or lurking submarine, or even a possible rush attack through the smoke screen by a half-flotilla of enemy torpedo craft. This was more a possibility than a probability, for never in the history of the Dover Patrol did German destroyers press home their attacks by day.

The date chosen proved to be an exceedingly fortunate one, for we had bright sunshine, a flat, calm sea and

sufficiently low visibility to make the ships invisible from the shore. Our spotting was carried out most effectively by aeroplanes. The return fire from the big gun positions ashore was more than usually inaccurate on account of the weather conditions and the careful aerial guard which was kept today. The bombardments completed, the *Broke* returned *via* Dunkirk Roads to Dover, and the four Admirals landed after what can only have been a very pleasant day.

I may say that we only heard of Admiral Mayo's projected visit an hour before he came on board. We did not possess a full Admiral's flag of the United States Navy in our signal locker, but "our Mr. Smith," the yeoman of the signals, who never was found failing, quickly manufactured one. The flag is blue, with four white stars on it. He had not time to do anything but tack the white stars on when the Admiral stepped on board and his flag had to be hoisted. The flag stood very well until the *Terror* fired her first shot; we were quite close to her, and the subsequent concussion caused one of the tacked-on stars to drop out of the flag. Fortunately Lieut. Despart was the only one to notice the falling star, and whilst the four Admirals were below having tea, the flag was hauled down and the star adjusted into place once more.

When the Admirals disembarked, we presented this flag to Admiral Mayo, it being the first time that a full Admiral's flag of the United States Navy had been under fire on board a British man-of-war.

Many of the officials who crossed on the Dover destroyers had never been on board a man-of-war before, and to those whose first experience it was of travelling, under the white ensign, everything was interesting,

except, of course, in bad weather. The great, silent Navy appealed to them, with its conditions, customs and altogether foreign figures of speech. It is perhaps a good thing that the Admiralty allow us such freedom of speech now-a-days, when hostilities have ceased, for one realises that what to us is absolutely commonplace and devoid of interest, often furnishes strangers with quite a different impression of life, and for quaint sea creatures, not accustomed to associating with cabinet ministers and high officials, the presence on board of the "great, wise and eminent," afforded a break to the general routine.

Personally, I derived much amusement from comparing the different types of men and their viewpoints on the war, which usually formed the main topic of conversation as we sped across the channel. Mr. Balfour was always polite. Mr. Lloyd George never appeared distressed or dejected in any way, and his appearance alongside the ship generally elicited a cheer from the ship's company of whatever destroyer was taking him. Mr. Churchill was full of quiet humour and excellent company always.

Queen Elizabeth was the best sailor of all; however rough the weather, she thoroughly enjoyed herself.

One day I was talking to Mr. Churchill on board a small vessel which was waiting to carry a really splendid collection of "knuts" across, and as we watched them file on board, each accompanied by his parasites and hangers-on, a little, dark-haired, spectacled man appeared at the end of the bow. He quickly glanced about him before walking on board. Mr. Churchill raised his hat and said to me, "That is the real great man amongst us." "Who is he?" I asked. "Venizelos," he replied.

I ventured that I thought other great men were there, but the late First Lord insisted that this little Greek was the greatest.

Lord Milner always impressed the sailors very much, and others, like Sir Eric Geddes, General Smuts, Sir Edward Carson, Mr. Hughes, Sir Robert Borden, and the American Admiral Benson, all brought with them special distinctions or characteristics by which they were remembered.

The people who talked least of all were the ambassadors; I suppose it was their trade not to give themselves away. The people who talked most were always the Americans. They had more to say than anybody, but then I had so much affection for them and so many friends in the States myself, that I opened out more to the United States soldiers and sailors than to those who spoke languages with which I was unacquainted.

We were conversing about our distinguished passengers after a rather heavy season of ferry trips made in our time off patrol, and I was very much struck with a remark made by a junior officer during the discussion. He said, "How very ordinary these great men are." I could not help laughing, and I replied, "Do you think they grow ostrich feathers or have peacocks' tails? What do you expect?"

"Oh! no, sir," the sub. replied, "but they seem so 'bally' ignorant."

CHAPTER XIV

DOVER MINE-SWEEPERS

Not the least picturesque character in the Dover Patrol was Lieut-Commendar W. G. Rigg, R.N., who was the first Dover officer to win the D.S.O. Rigg had left the Navy and at the outbreak of hostilities was a district inspector of the Royal National Lifeboat Association. The retired navy rejoined in its entirety (it *had* to!) and Rigg's original appointment was as mine-sweeping officer, Dover. When this appointment was made it was considered that the Dover area was impossible to mine on account of the strong tides for which we know it is famous, or, shall I say, infamous. Rigg was practically the junior officer, who could be classed as expert in this particular work; he bowed to the decision of authorities and repaired to the port in question. To begin with he was given four old trawlers, which arrived at Dover straight from their fishing grounds, having discharged their fish cargo at Milford Haven *en route*. They arrived at Dover empty, with no appliances whatever, except rusty old trawling wires; and Rigg with his self-contained staff of one, smilingly inspected the four vessels, two of which rejoiced in the names of *Falmouth* and *Abelard*, and two others, whose names I cannot remember. Within four days they were actually sweeping, and as the Dover surf deer made their way

into port from the flanking station at Leathercoat, these four toilers of the sea were always in evidence, making quite safe the entry to the harbour.

In 1914 no mines were laid by the enemy in our area, but in other parts of our coasts considerable activity obtained, and it was only a question of when the horned "eggs" would appear in the Straits. Gradually the Admiralty acquired more auxiliary vessels to perfect the mine-sweeping organisation, and as these units became available Dover got her scanty supply.

By the end of 1914 we had about eight trawlers working at the mine-sweeping under the command of Rigg. Because no mines had yet been found, although the area was swept with commendable industry in spite of the dreadful weather obtaining towards the end of 1914, the mine-sweepers carried out a variety of duties, for which I may say they volunteered, for these fishermen were so zealous that they never gave anybody a chance of imposing duties upon them.

On one occasion the influx of Belgian refugees was so great that 4,500 of them found themselves in small steamers alongside The Prince of Wales' Pier. The mine-sweepers, who had been toiling until 3 a.m. arrived at the pier and quickly grasped that the poor Belgians were without food and any sort of comfort. They were, in fact, so crowded together that there was standing room only, on board the vessels that carried them. I do not know the exact reasons for their being retained on the little steamers, perhaps it was on account of the capture of thirty spies which were found secreted amongst the refugees; anyhow, it is to be presumed that there was cause enough for the delay in landing these poor people. Rigg, with his minesweeper skippers, firemen, boys and

lined old mariners made it their business to do what they could for the unfortunate Belgians, and they had the whole forty-five hundred of them fed and tended between 8 a.m. and noon. This was a wonderful feat when we consider that the total complements of the eight small mine-sweepers did not exceed a hundred men. They gave all their provisions, all their money and practically everything they possessed. A stream of billies full of cocoa and tea made its way from the trawlers to the refugee ships. Rigg went the round of the hotels in search of milk for the babies and children. He collected bucketfuls, which he brought to the pier in his motor-car. When I say collected, I mean literally commandeered it, for this officer and one or two men who were with him simply carried the buckets into the hotel dining-room and emptied the jugs of milk they found on the tables!

The cheerful and willing assistance rendered by the mine-sweepers did no end of good amongst the refugees. The stimulus to obtain the milk materialised through the request made to Rigg by a Belgian lady supporting a badly wounded soldier lying on the deck of one of the steamers. The weeping children had almost passed unnoticed, for the Belgian mothers had hushed their sobbing infants so that their wailing would not help to make matters worse.

Fortunately, the weather was perfect, otherwise these poor people would have been in a moderate hell. Commander Rigg removed one poor woman from the steamer and took her to the Lord Warden Hotel, where she gave birth to a child after her arrival. Men, women and children had been standing on board for forty-eight solid hours.

Fortunately there are always bright incidents connected with these sad scenes, and the mine-sweepers smilingly will tell you of "Bourgomaster Max" and his wife. This was a title they gave to a man of superhuman energies, who had the gift of seeing before anyone else what this or that poor creature was in need of. The two people were splendid and if they come across these lines, I hope they will realise that their friends, the mine-sweepers, still talk about them in tones of admiration. The Belgians in question will not forget this nickname which the rough sailors used freely in addressing them.

The foregoing is merely an incident in the history of the Dover mine-sweepers, and it occurred during their more idle days.

The complements of the Dover mine-sweeping section increased, as vessels became available, to 84 trawlers, 18 paddle mine-sweepers and twelve motor launches, while 3,000 men and 350 officers joined this service. Lieut. Arthur Buckland became second in command, and this officer, whose courage was absolutely unshakeable, has spent many years in sweeping up mines. Some of the men who came down to join Rigg's mine-sweeping force had been already blown up twice before they arrived on the scene. Sailors don't care!

In the spring of 1915 Dover was beset by mines, and on a certain occasion when Rigg and his mine-sweepers were out, the cargo steamer *Toward* blew up. A second steamer quickly followed her and sank in a matter of seconds. The yacht *Aries* went in to try and save the crews and was herself mined and sunk, and it was only by the greatest luck that a thirty-knot destroyer, rushing headlong into the mess, was headed off and kept from

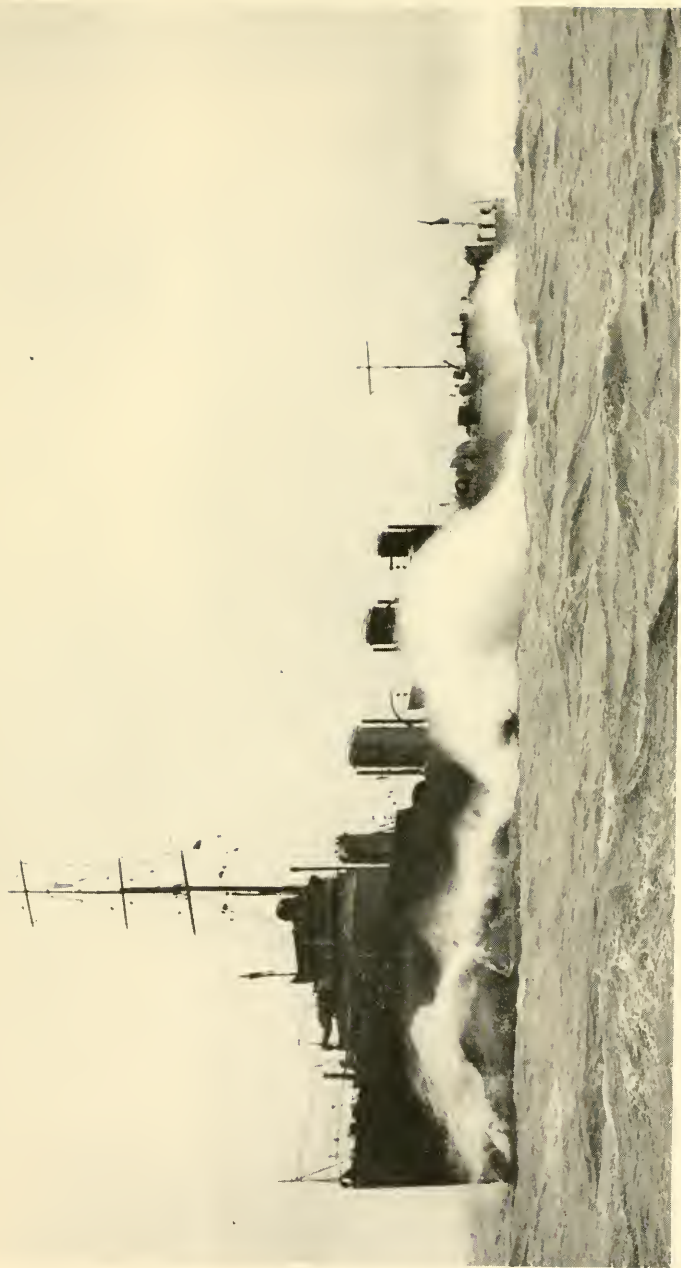
committing suicide. This was one of our darkest days in the patrol, a whole gale was blowing from the south-west accompanied by a terrific sea, which made sweeping impossible. The mine-sweepers stood by the dangerous area and unfortunately the trawler *Othello* was blown up whilst waiting to sweep. The only survivor of this little ship was a signal boy.

It was difficult to stop the traffic; however, Admiral Bacon succeeded in doing this, and 151 ships were held up in the Downs and 101 to the west of Folkestone Gate. Long before the gale had abated the sweeping was recommenced, but it was not very effective, owing to the difficulty in manœuvring the ships while such a sea was running. A channel was however swept outside the dangerous area, passing to the southward of it, and finally the traffic was released and led through by mine-sweeping officers, who piloted the ships from the *Cossack* and another Dover destroyer.

The people of Dover, thoroughly shaken up by the succession of explosions which took place two days before, watched from the tops of their houses this extraordinary procession of ships. It is no exaggeration to say that they formed an unbroken line, for from the shore they had the appearance of a long black snake with bristles sticking out from its back.

A great friend and admirer of the Dover mine-sweepers was Lieut. C. Gartside Tipping, who commanded the yacht *Sanda*, and it was a severe blow to Rigg and his sweepers when that officer was killed by a shell off Zeebrugge at the age of 68. I believe that I am right in saying that he was the oldest naval officer afloat.

In a volume such as this one cannot expand at any great length on such a vast subject as mine-sweeping, but



"CRUSADER" THROWING IT ABOUT A BIT.

we destroyer folk made friends amongst the trawler skippers as well as with the more senior mine-sweeping officers. They had a fund of humour in the mine-sweeping craft, and they were extraordinarily fond of pets. One had a monkey, most of them had dogs; and chickens, pigs, and kittens were all to be found on their craft. On one of the trawlers I came across a huge kennel on which was painted "Lion." Inside was the tiniest mongrel puppy I had ever set eyes on. On this ship there were no less than eleven dog-kennels on the deck, and when I made some joke as to lumbering up the already crowded space, a dry old fellow merely put me wise by informing me that if the mine-sweeper was blown up, kennels were as good as boats, a thing I had not thought of, but it is very true, for a heavy thing like a boat is often smashed at the davits when a mine explosion takes place.

My gunner in the *Viking* always held the opinion that the mine-sweepers should have been manned by conscientious objectors, for the object of mine-sweeping was certainly philanthropic enough in its way.

I am glad to say that groups of understanding people supplied the mine-sweepers with warm clothing, comforts of all descriptions, and with literature, footballs and games. The motto of the mine-sweepers was "Who's afraid!" Certainly they were not.

CHAPTER XV

A LITTLE BIT OF SHORE TIME, MORE FLAG CHANGES AND A LADLE-FULL OF FICTION

Towards the end of October, 1917, Admiral Bacon sent for me and told me that Captain Humphrey Bowring, D.S.O., his Chief-of-Staff, was leaving Dover to get in his sea time, and the Admiral asked if I would like to relieve him. I naturally said yes, realising that one would learn a great deal as Chief-of-Staff to such a clever man, apart from the fact that I was now somewhat senior to be sculling round in a destroyer, without being Captain (D).

Accordingly, I first relieved Captain Percy Withers for a week or so while he went on leave and I got into the habit of controlling the Sixth Flotilla, arranging the patrols and carrying out the requisite administrative work. Then I moved into the Admiral's office and took over from "Hindenburg," who explained the operations planned for the future and told me my various duties. In a few days Captain Bowring left Dover and I took over his duties.

Amongst other things, I had to make out the orders under Admiral Bacon's directions, for laying the huge minefield which was placed between Folkestone and Grisnez, for the purpose of stopping submarines entering the English Channel. By this time we had learnt a

great deal concerning mine-laying, and we had the satisfaction of knowing that our mines would now go off. Without wishing to criticise unduly, I may say that many mines broke adrift owing to the inadequacy of the mooring arrangements, or else to the improper fitting and mooring of the mines by those whose duty it was to see to this.

The barrage was certainly the best that had yet been put down in the Dover Patrol, for we were given as many miles as we required, and it only became a question of maintaining the barrage in an efficient state. A very fine plan was evolved at the Admiralty, according to which the whole of the Dover Strait in the vicinity of the minefield was to be illuminated by flares burnt from the auxiliary patrol craft, and this portion of the channel was to rejoice in eternal day, so to speak. Provided the flares were burnt in organised fashion it would be impossible for a submarine to pass through the Strait on the surface, which the Admiralty assumed they had been doing. The idea was that with sufficient hunting craft operating in the illuminated area, any submarine sighted would be forced to dive, and the minefield was so arranged that with her periscope awash, the submarine would always be in danger of striking a mine; rows and rows were being put down, and other means, which I am not at liberty to describe, were projected to assist in the U boat destruction.

Admiral Bacon was relieved of his command at the end of the year by Admiral Keyes, with whom I had the honour to serve for a few weeks, until his own staff joined the Dover Patrol and relieved me of my duties as flag captain and Chief-of-Staff. My next appointment was to command the light cruiser *Active*, for the purpose of

running large, slow convoys to Gibraltar and other places.

Before finally saying farewell to the Dover Patrol I must not forget an incident concerning the loss of a confidential book. The Vice-Admiral commanding the Dover Patrol was on one occasion travelling in the destroyed *Mohawk* (not when she was commanded by the author). The Admiral travelled from Dunkirk to Dover, and once clear of the Dyck light vessel, he repaired to the chart house to rest, for he had been out on the Belgian coast throughout the night before.

Glancing round the chart house, his gaze lit upon a document marked "Most secret." It contained the chart of the British minefields, and the Admiral realised that if the ship had struck a mine, there was nothing to prevent this unweighted document from floating away and possibly falling into the hands of the enemy. He accordingly put it into his despatch case and said no more about it until he was safely in Dover, when he signalled the guilty destroyer captain to repair to his office with confidential chart, Y.14, or whatever it was called. The Lieut-Commander searched his confidential book cupboard, the chart house and every possible hole or corner for the document in question, but in vain; large beads of sweat collected on his brow, and after the most searching questions, he established without doubt that the chart had been consulted by the Sub-Lieut. a few minutes before the Admiral entered the chart house; from that time it had been missing.

My young friend, the destroyer captain was from the North country and pretty hard-headed at that, after putting two and two together he surmised that the Admiral was gently pulling his leg. He accordingly

repaired to the Admiral's office to consult the Great Mogul. I can so well picture his feelings; gazing into those steel blue eyes which saw through every one of us; I can almost feel the shudder that vibrated through the Lieut.-Commander's frame when the Admiral put it to him that he had lost his secret chart. In a few icy but well chosen words, the Admiral reprimanded the officer then, opening the drawer of his desk, he handed the envelope containing the mine chart back. The destroyer captain blurted out a confused apology and withered away. Finding himself, one might say, a broken man on board his little torpedo craft, he consoled himself with that priceless tonic, a good old gin and bitters. His companions sympathetically gathered around him in the ward room, and once the spirit had warmed him back to life he felt a little more courageous and, embittered by the thought that his expected promotion was at stake, he ordered another gin and bitters, stamped on the floor, drank it down and said, "To hell with the man! Things have come to a pretty pass if you cannot trust your own Vice-Admiral not to steal your confidential books."

As a matter of fact, Admiral Bacon was one of the kindest of men in many ways, and although I never thought he did justice to us in the destroyer service, I never lost sight of the fact that we represented only one of the many strings to his fiddle, and in looking through his recommendations, one was forced to admit that he tried to do his best for each branch and unit of his command. Undoubtedly the destroyers, drifters, and mine-sweepers and trawlers had the roughest time, with the possible exception of those on the commodore's staff at Dunkirk; but there were the monitor people, the flying

men, the submarines and others who all had their exciting time and who never let him down. We all get our rewards somehow and somewhen, and we appreciated one another's efforts. Most of us were out to hunt for scalps and for my own part, I have in my possession four beautiful silver candlesticks from the twelve monitor captains of 1915-16, and also a silver teapot from the Dover destroyers, which I appreciate far more than any M.V.O. or D.S.O., for they represent after all the esteem and appreciation of one's own kind, who were type specimens of the Britons who really counted in this great war.

Admiral Bacon was in some ways secretive about his plans, and even when I was flag captain to him, he planned and did many things with which I was quite unacquainted. But he did something which I got to know about in spite of all his secrecy; for instance, one of our most gallant fighters found himself in serious financial straits and bordering on bankruptcy. Without saying a word to the individual, the Admiral sent him anonymously, through one of his friends, the sum of £200. As only one other man besides "Fred Karno" knows whom this money was sent to, there is no harm in stating this, for the helping hand was sufficient, and the officer in question is now facing life afresh and facing it finely too.

We all have had our crosses to bear in this war, and Admiral Bacon has not escaped without his sorrows. He gave his first son, a soldier, for old England and, to my lasting regret, his only other boy died suddenly of pneumonia a couple of months after hostilities ceased. Little Robin Bacon was well known to the Dover Patrol; he often travelled across channel in my *Viking* as an

Osborne cadet. He was passionately fond of destroyers, and he sometimes came on board to fish in Dover Harbour. He was not always fortunate in his choice of tides for fishing, but rather than disappoint him, the kindly blue-jackets would give him a line, and while one attracted his attention to something going on in the harbour, another would pull up the line, hook on a dead flat-fish, tip the wink to the wardroom steward who would wait a second, then, quickly putting his hand through the scuttle near which the line was trailing, give two short jerks and my little friend would haul on board a fish. I had every sympathy with this boy, who was forced to leave the Navy owing to a weak heart, and at that time having no children of my own, I spent quite a lot of my spare time in writing and telling him stories. I think my best effort was the following; it is purely fictitious and was written on the bridge of my ship, which I practically never left in war time. My readers can cut it out if it doesn't interest them.

THE LOBSTER THAT KICKED

I

The little cruiser *Porcupine* was a new arrival at the port of Kouro-Bambo, and her captain paused in his morning walk on the deck and gazed along the unfamiliar shore line. The glare of the yellow sands and the gleaming white of the houses almost pained his eyes. His steward, who had been ashore, interrupted his contemplation of the little African town by coming up to display his purchases—a lobster and a crayfish, and two fine specimens they were—one looking very English with his rounded indigo back and his powerful sinister claws, and the other very foreign with rugged purple, spiky body.

"If you want the best, sir, you must choose those that kick," said the steward, who was of course, an expert on such matters.

The captain was amused and interested. He lifted them up, one after the other, and they kicked and clicked their claws vigorously. If the steward's theory were sound, he had assuredly chosen well.

The captain went into his cosily furnished cabin, and, taking the receiver off its stand, telephoned to the signal bridge some invitations to lunch. A Frenchman, an Italian and an American responded to the resulting semaphore message that bade them to the table of the captain of the *Porcupine*. The answer in each case was the signalled letters, "W.M.P." To have been correct, French, the language of diplomacy, should have been employed both for the message and the answers, but the jargon of the sea served as well, and better. "With much pleasure," they all understood, and considering each signalman knew his mother tongue and no other, the facility with which the communication passed was extraordinary.

The forenoon sped away in sunshine and gentle breeze. The clear blue water near the anchored ships sparkled away into a golden glitter towards the steeper part of the African coast. The dazzling brightness hurt the eyes if one's gaze were continued over long, for there was July heat in it and the latitude was low. The morning was passed with the usual activity in the *Porcupine*, the smoothly working routine reflecting credit on her executive officer. The men, after inspection and prayers, ran barefooted in flannels and trousers round and round the deck; then away aloft up the rigging on one side, down again on the other; forward, aft, to starboard, back to

port, and finally to halt and "dress" once more on the quarter deck.

The *Porcupine* was a real ship—a little one it is true, but she was built as a man-of-war, had an active service crew, save for a few pensioners and fleet reserve men, and a very active-service first lieutenant. "No. 1" was such a tower of strength and naval efficiency that, when he got angry, even the captain was quiet and kept out of the way, like a discreet mouse. For the captain knew men. He knew young men best, and he knew just how each one felt. He had done his share of first lieutenant's time and was well aware that no ship is big enough to have both captain and first lieutenant doing the latter's work. That was why he made himself scarce when No. 1 was in Bersark mood. No. 1 was Irish, and he sometimes stretched things and cut men's tempers pretty fine—but never once too fine—and it was just at these times, when he threw his arms about, opened his mouth and made a noise, that his captain emulated the discreet mouse. He was not very big himself.

There were other times in the *Porcupine's* life when the first lieutenant felt his patience exhausted and his temper too dangerous, and then the captain was called in to help matters out and to talk to the crew. So life began afresh. Number One's ruffled feathers would be smoothed down, and everybody knew that all was well, but that better look-outs must be kept, that the boat's crews must dress better, pull better, and not get caught smoking when waiting at the landing stages—and so on and so forth. The skipper knew how to talk, and he loved these ugly men dearly, for he owed much to them.

The captain's orations usually took place on Sunday, when most of the crew were accessible, and generally

followed the short reading of prayers that is quaintly recorded in a ship's log-book as "performed divine service." The occasional address concluded, the captain invariably nods to the steel and sinewy "No. 1" who salutes and, turning to the hands, gives the order—"Turn for'ard, right and left turn, double march." The last word snaps out and sets in motion a bobbing, doubling, hobbling, barefooted, or heavy-booted crowd of muscular, simple-minded men.

It was not often that the captain felt constrained to make such an address, for there was never any serious "slacking off" in the *Porcupine*, nor is there in any other man-of-war when proper discipline obtains, when officers look after the interests of their men, and, lastly, when the men's own hearts are true. But, even in men-of-war, men's hearts are sometimes weak and temptations strong, and you ashore, who have lovely homes, and pretty wives or handsome husbands, or babies to bath and love—you know nothing of the temptations that beset the hard-earned leisure hours of "the lobster that kicks," to apply that sobriquet to the high-spirited young wanderers who go down to the sea in ships. The most excellent lobster that was ever destined for boiling never kicked more lustily in protest at being held up for inspection than a good sailor kicks against inactivity and boredom.

The captain's lunch party assembled at 1 p.m. The Frenchman was a senior, bearded, man with the red and green ribbons of the Legion D'Honneur and the Croix de Guerre, and he called the more youthful captain, "*Mon cher fils.*" The Italian, a perfect peacock in the matter of decorations, was a distinguished young nobleman and recently attaché at a European embassy—

polished, alert, and observant. The American, young also, and fresh into the war, came on board with a great salute, a sweeping bow, and then, in sheer high spirits, went through the mock ceremony of kissing the captain's hand—after the gallant fashion of his Italian confrère with the ladies of Kouro-Bamba. The Frenchman and Italian were amused, for although they had never met the American before, they knew that he had recently shared with the captain of the *Porcupine* the splendid pleasure of sinking an enemy submarine, and therefore understood the reason for his gaiety.

At lunch they were the cheeriest little party imaginable. All languages were mixed, like the fruit salad which ended what the lobster started—a very creditable war-time meal. The men each signed four *ménu* cards, which were pocketed as souvenirs. Then drank to the Allies and separately to France, England, Italy and America. They smoked and discussed the war, their commands, their achievements and ambitions. They were just four big boys and nothing more, but they were by no means narrow in their views. They were all great travellers and, as the Arabs say, "He who travels far sees much." Their yarns were full of colour and interest, for they were sailors, and each of them had imbibed the poetry of the sea.

At three o'clock the little party broke up abruptly, for two of their four ships were to leave that afternoon for a week's cruise along the sun-baked African coast. The Englishman saw his guests over the side, and then, while the lunch was being cleared away, he strolled upon the decks. It was distressingly hot, and he wondered how the white people could live through the fetid summer months at Kouro Bamba. He searched the shore

with his telescope and then, swinging on his heel, his thoughts turned to his beloved *Porcupine* again.

It was a "make and mend" afternoon—the afternoon when the sailors are free to repair and wash their clothes, write, read, or spend their time as best pleased them. Some were reading, some writing, some sleeping, while others tinkled mandolines or fashioned little models. The carpenter's mate was making a tiny chair for Peter, his baby boy. He was a little premature with his task and also in naming his child, for it appeared that, as yet, Peter was only "expected." The captain watched the fingers of the nimble "Chippy Chap"* at work, and the latter explained that Peter should arrive in about three months' time. The captain laughed rather shyly, for he himself was unmarried, and after chatting with the man about his home for a little while he turned away to find the first lieutenant, with the idea of inviting him to land for a walk and tea.

II

THE periods spent by the *Porcupine* in port became more frequent, for the enemy no longer flew his flag in those distant, sunlit seas. The crews of the various allied ships became fretful and discontented. They had come to fight, but the patrols yielded nothing—not the merest flutter of the world-hated enemy ensign.

The "Porcupines" were no better than their fellows. It was fighting they wanted, and they had energy to expend. Ashore they met men of other ships that had

* Sea slang for all carpenter ratings.

been in the neighborhood throughout the war. They began to mix with them and drink with them, and in three months many of the bright, clear-eyed boys from the *Porcupine* were on the downward road. The same story was oft repeated when they were brought before the captain.

"Just one or two beers and a couple of "Vinos," sir, and I don't remember nothing more."

The men's records were clean, and at first it was difficult to credit the patrol reports. One evening, however, when the captain had been dining ashore with the French skipper, he saw for himself that the reports were well founded. On the way down to their boats, which awaited them at the mole, a seaman rolled unsteadily into the glare of an electric light which cast a big illuminated circle on the dusty road. The two captains stepped aside to avoid the tipsy giant.

"*Ma foi*," exclaimed the Frenchman.

"*Le roi des zig-zageurs*," said the Englishman lightly, but he did not feel light-hearted, for he had recognized the man as one of the best of his crew.

"They're lobsters that kick," he muttered to himself as he entered his cabin, "and I'm going to kick too." He sat down at his writing-table and penned a pathetic appeal to the one admiral he knew.

"The environment of Kouro-Bamba," he wrote, "is unhealthy. The ship is becoming demoralised. officers for want of exercise are losing all their freshness, and the men, poisoned by the liquor which the natives sell, are frittering their fine health away. Their moral fibre is being broken down by the temptations of this torrid African hell."

He turned in, switched on the electric fan, and tried to

go to sleep. But the air was heavy with the heat and for a long time he lay thinking of what he had written.

The Admiral was one of the sternest of Sea Lords, and the letter, although written privately, was in the nature of a complaint. There was, however, no British Admiral at Kouro-Bamba and, rightly or wrongly, the *Porcupine's* skipper had kicked.

III

It was the last night on the station. The *Porcupine* had been ordered away on a special mission. The coaling was finished, and the provisions, ammunition, and other stores taken abroad. All shore-leave was stopped, for the *Porcupine* was to sail at dawn.

Many friendships had been made on the station, with allied ships and with allied folk at Kouro-Bamba. That port of mushroom growth, which but two years before was merely a little village nestling peacefully in the midst of a wealth of glorious vegetation, had become a southern Klondyke. Rough sheds and gimcrack buildings contrasted rudely with fantastic minarets and cream-white native houses. Fortunes had been made there as a result of the war, and money had been scattered prodigally in hospitality to the officers and crews of the allied ships. It would be hard to say which of the allied nations controlled the port commercially, so varied and extraordinary were the war-time interests concerned. The military control, however, was pronounced and efficient, and with the natural defences of the extraordinary place, rendered Kouro-Bamba free from danger of the enemy—that is to say from the enemy without,

for the enemy within was at work ruining the honest man, fleecing the soldier and sailor, and extorting the ugliest sums of money from the governments interested in the place.

The captain's appeal to his admiral had procured the desired result, for he had been selected with his ship to take part in the hunting down and destroying of a commerce raider which had appeared in adjacent seas. The *Porcupine* had been relieved by a similar vessel, so it was good-bye to this newly created African port, with all its charms and tricks, attractions and sins. There had been many happy hours to look back to, and yet there were thoughts of certain days in the port that brought regrets and unpleasant reflections to the minds of the *Porcupine's* boys, both officers and men.

* * * * *

The Captain was pacing the quarter-deck before dinner—the dinner which the wardroom officers were giving to their most intimate friends at the base port, and to which he had been invited. He had dressed early, and was watching the sun set behind a low bank of stratus cloud which slowly rolled in from the sea, promising the usual morning mist—the mist which will at least bring a welcome moisture to the sultry atmosphere of Kouro-Bamba. There is little twilight in those latitudes, and before many minutes the stars were peeping out and welcoming the full moon as she rose gracefully and cast her silver sheen over the gently heaving sea. From the three funnels of the *Porcupine* little wisps of smoke curled thinly towards the zenith in the calmness of the African nightfall.

The captain gazed at the rising moon, and then around

at the fairylike lights of the distant town. Up there on the rocky slopes were more little pin-points of light. A faint breath of air stirred the water and brought the tiniest soupçon of dampness to his nostrils, and the faintest scent of that strange, sad land of Africa. A light footfall caused him to turn his head. It was his Irish first lieutenant, in white mess jacket and dark cloth trousers.

"Are you ready for dinner, sir, our guests have all arrived?"

"Yes, No. 1," the captain answered, and then, looking across the moonlit sea, he added, "this is very beautiful, but it isn't war for us."

His second-in-command concurred.

"Life has been too easy at Kouro-Bamba," he said, thinking of the punishment return, "and too demoralising."

"Yes," said the captain, with a laugh, "but the lobster has kicked—and kicked to some purpose, too; and he told No. 1 of the step he had taken to get the *Porcupine* moved, and of the special service upon which she was to be employed.

They turned and made their way to the ward-room where the table had been extended to run the whole length of the mess. The marines, in their white mess tunics and white gloves, bustled around with the silver plated dishes, and the two wine stewards betrayed their presence by the repeated popping of champagne corks.

The minature banquet began. The guests were not all British, but they were all good fellows—young men, mostly soldiers or sailors. Nothing mattered that night, for the *Porcupine* would be off in a few hours and was



LIEUTENANT PULLEN, R.N.V.R.

hardly likely to return. She had been popular, and would be missed. The sailor guests were envious, for they felt that the *Porcupine* would get her chance.

The evening passed merrily—hilariously, with laughter and song. The wardroom servants cleared the dinner table and passed round smokes and silver trays of whiskies. The big table was then unrigged, and amidst a furore of applause the engineer-lieutenant took his seat at the piano. Songs of all kinds he accompanied. The words and music floated up through the wardroom skylight, and out into the stillness of the African night. The sing-song continued for an hour or two, and then the men danced. The atmosphere of the wardroom was too thick for words, and eyes began to smart from the clouds of tobacco and cigar smoke. Officers and other guests danced in their shirt-sleeves with pipes in their mouths, without a care in the world.

At midnight the skipper said good-night, but not so the other guests. Their farewell was made at 3 a.m., when the sleepy crew of the motor-boat were awakened by the quartermaster, and the guests, still singing, left the ship amidst cheers, good-byes, and a chorus of "For they are jolly good fellows." The little boat cuts through the water and the "chug, chug" of her motor gradually becomes inaudible in the distance.

IV

THE mist had crept over the land and hidden the low-lying parts of the coast from view. Unhealthy-looking and yellow, the rising sun gleamed in sickly fashion through the curtain of moisture. The *Porcupine* glided

out of harbour past the allied squadron, and in an hour she was lost to view.

The captain was glad to be quit of Kouro-Bamba, its climate and baleful influence over his crew. As the days passed, he noted with satisfaction the old sea-fresh look coming back to the men. The work was better done, the guns better kept, and gradually the old efficiency returned, and that "seek out and destroy the enemy" kind of keenness began to show itself.

The days were spent at exercises and drills, and in the dog watches men were to be seen boxing, wrestling and fencing, or performing gymnastic feats on the parallel bars and vaulting horse. The captain yearned for an opportunity of testing the *Porcupine* against an equal foe.

It was one day when the R.N.R. lieutenant was on watch that a strange ship came in sight. Something about her appearance prompted him to send the messenger down to the lower bridge for the captain. The latter came up and brought his glasses to bear upon the distant hull. At first glance there seemed nothing amiss, but the R.N.R. officer pointed out certain suspicious details. There was much in what he said, and a few seconds later the alarm bells and rattlers called the "Porcupines" to quarters.

There was little wind, and the long ocean swell alternately revealed and hid the hull of the suspicious vessel. The *Porcupine* knew what vessels and convoys should be met with, and the stranger was certainly not one of them.

The two vessels approached on slightly converging courses, and then the *Porcupine* drew ahead, and got the mysterious steamer's masts in line. From a distance of

several miles she flashed the two-flag signal, which to all the seamen of the world signifies "stop instantly." The stranger steamed steadily on. The signal was repeated by flags, by long and short notes on the syren, and was flashed unmistakably on the searchlight. In addition a blank charged was fired. The stranger ignored the *Porcupine's* signals, and continued on her course. The *Porcupine* remained a couple of miles ahead, and, after a reasonable period, another gun belched forth its electric-yellow flash, and a white column of water spurted up about two hundred yards clear of the oncoming steamer. She turned immediately to port and brought her starboard side towards that of the *Porcupine*. The Ships were now not more than 3,000 yards apart. Suddenly five whitish-yellow spurts of flame flashed from the stranger's side, but before the missiles reached the *Porcupine* an answering five crashes announced that the British ship had likewise fired a salvo, for the Irish first lieutenant had been controlling since the call to action stations sent men scurrying to their guns. The stranger's range was known to a yard or so at the instant the word to shoot was passed. Almost simultaneously five weird sounds told the captain that the stranger's salvo had struck the sea. He knew well that "ker-hook-ah" plunk of the misses. The salvo had fallen splendidly together, but for the *Porcupine* splendidly short!

An indescribable thrill passed through the captain's breast—it was the ecstasy of sea-fighting, which had been denied him for so long. It almost took his breath away, and he smiled with sparkling eye at the navigator.

"We shall get a good scrap now, pilot; this is a fighting Hun," he said.

The navigator had no time to answer, for a cheer broke from somewhere abaft and below them, and the yeoman—"our Mr. Smith," the most be-medalled man in the ship—with a dry grin, reported:

"Two 'its, sir."

Another salvo crashed forth.

"Three 'its, two short shots," the yeoman reported, and, as he spoke, the order "rapid independent, commence," was passed to the starboard guns.

The range and rate had been carefully estimated and passed, and the fire became rapid and fierce. The two ships preserved their relative bearings, steaming on the arc of a circle about two miles in diameter. It was remarkable how they maintained their distance.

From the *Porcupine's* bridge dull red flames and yellow-brown smoke could be seen rising from the stranger, which told of the damage she had suffered. The long-drawn, hissing whistle of the enemy's shell spoke of harmless misses, but the slowing down of the *Porcupine's* fire revealed the fact that she, too, had been badly hit.

"Our Mr. Smith" stood slightly above the captain and the navigator. Smith was a pensioner—and older than any of the officers—and he was almost fathering the fight. All the "Porcupines" were proud of him and of his fighting record. His eyes saw everything that happened to the enemy. What his eye saw as he looked aft he did not report. He knew that the casualties were dreadful, but he was quite confident as to the result, and would not ruffle the coolness of the captain nor the precision of the orders that come down from the fire control. He swanked around on his little platform with his telescope waving about, and in jerky phrases

told what he saw to those on the bridge just below him.

The captain and navigator looked at one another with grim smiles, for the smell of burning paintwork was coming up to their nostrils, and it was plain to them that hits were being registered although, in the smoke and deafening noise, the two men could not tell where. Messengers were sent to enquire, and they slithered down the ladderways and stepped over dying men as they went. The navigator confirmed the yeoman's statement that the enemy's fire was slackening. He marked the gun flashes, and noted that her after guns were silent.

"Concentrate more on the forepart of her," ordered the skipper to the fire control.

The necessary adjustments were made and suddenly the yeoman, excited for the first time, shouted:

"A torpedo, sir."

He pointed with his telescope, his arm extended, and although it would spoil the shooting, the captain altered away. The torpedo broke surface, owing to the swell, then tearing along with incredible swiftness, it made direct for the *Porcupine*. But the alteration in helm had been sufficient, and the deadly thing passed harmlessly away to starboard.

The enemy turned her stern to the *Porcupine*. She was either seizing the opportunity of ramming, or wished to bring her other side to bear at a greater distance. The skipper of the British ship decided to give his other battery a chance, and continued round under starboard helm, a desultory, ding-dong fire continuing in the meantime. But the range opened considerably in the process, and the heavier guns of the enemy made the

better shooting. Two great rents appeared on the port quarter of the *Porcupine* before she straightened up, and all the after part of her upper deck was a burning wreck. The stokers' fire brigade rushed to the scene and fought a battle of their own—a grim battle against the fire-fiend made more perilous by the danger of exploding ammunition. Nobody saw them, and nobody would ever know how heroically they fought.

The captain's manœuvre had disappointed him, but he was glad to give the other battery its opportunity. The men there had been restless with that rather fearful expectancy that is born of inactivity in action. Fighting is nothing when men are hitting back, and when they know their blows are telling. It is the period of waiting to join in the fray that tells.

There was a little flutter of white on board the strange ship. At first it was taken as a signal of surrender, but it was nothing of the sort. The enemy was hoisting the white ensign of the German Imperial navy, with its sombre black cross. A further challenge to the *Porcupine*, and an unmistakable indication of a worthy foe. The German, for some reason, had not hoisted his colours before, but he had now thrown aside the mask and shown his adversary that he meant to fight it out.

A little more manœuvring, and the *Porcupine* port guns all spoke at once. The enemy was steaming away with his stern towards the British ship. His fire ceased momentarily, but he swung further round to port, and all his guns from that side opened fire simultaneously. The range closed, for the *Porcupine* was easily the faster ship, and she approached so that her five guns on the one side bore. Her shells went crashing into the enemy, and the fire was returned with fury. The vessels

approached to within a mile, and it seemed impossible to miss, but shells flew over, and shells flew short, for the swell made the aim more difficult. The pungent odour of burning paint filled the air, torpedoes were fired from both vessels, as chances offered, but the heaving sea upset their accuracy, and the fight was essentially one of gunfire. The laughing gaiety of the *Porcupine's* men had disappeared and given place to grim, determined fighting. The speed of both ships had dropped, and steam, smoke, and flame seemed to envelope everything. Communications had all been shot away, and bloody, grimy men ran hither and thither with their messages, to find out, to report, and to take directions from the bridge. The enemy was burning furiously amidships, and his after guns had again been put out of action. His bow guns kept pounding away, however, almost always hitting, and one shell tore its way through the *Porcupine's* chart house, exploded, and shattered the lower bridge. The navigator ran with the captains' coxswain to steer from the after position, but steering was well-nigh useless, for the ship had nearly stopped.

A dirty, blood-bespattered wretch flopped, Lord knows how, onto the upper bridge. It was the Irish first lieutenant. He had slid from the control position aloft by a fighting stay down to the captain.

"The ship's sinking I think, sir," he said. "The stern's all under water and——"

He broke off suddenly, for the attention of both of them was attracted by a long, low flash, and a cloud like a dust storm. The enemy ship had disappeared.

The sub, a mere boy, appeared on the bridge, after being nearly crushed by No. 1, who was off down the

ladder at break-neck speed, with the intention of stopping the gaping wounds, and shoring up bulkheads afresh. The boy pulled himself together, and told the captain what he had done. His voice sounded strange and high-pitched in the stillness, for the crash of the guns had ceased. It was he—the sub—who had given the death blow to the raider by means of the last torpedo. Assisted by a giant seaman, the "*Roi des zig-zageurs*," already referred to, he had accurately laid the tube, and fired at the blazing German. The explosion must have caused her magazines to blow up, for the enemy ship had just vanished.

The skipper's delight was short-lived, for it was clear that the *Porcupine* herself was doomed. He made his way aft, and his feet went from under him more than once in the slippery mess of blood. The signal to abandon ship was given, and out went the rafts for none of the boats would float. It was only a matter of minutes before the ship must go under.

The surgeon, in long white operating cloak, blood-smudged but alert, was directing the evacuation of the wounded. The patient, quiet maimed ones lay yellowy-white and still. Few of them would live on the rafts, but they could not be abandoned.

A stoker came up with a message, and saluted with a coal-dirty hand.

"What do you say? Speak up man," for the captain could not understand his faltering whispered sentence.

"The chief engineer wants to say good-bye."

"What's wrong with the man, he's blubbing?"

The captain and navigator questioned him, then they dashed below to find the engineer lieutenant, cheerful, but mortally wounded. His men had been sent

away, but two E.R.A.'s* remained, begging him to let them carry him.

"It can't be done," he said, and he was right. Fearfully wounded, the poor fellow gripped at a metal rail. Water was pouring down the sides of the engine room, and at one end men's bodies were floating. The skipper and his companion bent over the wounded man. It was hopeless to save him. He smiled affectionately at his captain.

"Have we sunk her?" he murmured. "I oughtn't to ask, for otherwise you wouldn't be here."

A little groan—a great gulping sob—the dying man turned his head away and back again.

"Don't forget the engine-room when you send in your despatch, sir—get the chief E.R.A. promoted—and tell ——" but the poor fellow was gone before he could complete his message.

The two officers and the E.R.A.'s moved up the ladderway, and hardly had they reached the upper deck when the *Porcupine* went down by the stern. Those who had got clear on the rafts saw her ram bow thrust up from the water, and the toss of her proud victorious head as she went to her doom. The men noted that brave toss of the head and they burst into cheers.

The captain, first lieutenant, navigator and E.R.A.'s found themselves swimming in the sea, but there was plenty of wreckage, and it was not long before eager hands pulled them on to one of those little life-saving rafts which are known as Carley floats.

Within sight were other rafts appearing and disappearing in the swell. There was no food, and no water to

* Engine Room Artificer.

drink. In a few hours the effects of exposure in the tropical sun began to tell, and some men were sick from the effects of excitement, heat, and the perpetual ocean-heaving. Rafts have a very different motion from that of a ship. Night fell and the officers passed the time discussing the fight and their chances of being picked up. The chances were fairly good because, on going into action, a wireless message had been sent out to the other searching ships. They decided that it was a question of holding out, and that for the present there was no reason to fear that they would not be observed.

The battle with the raider was fought and re-fought again. Excitement was still buoying up the men's spirits and they kept a sharp lookout for signs of any German survivors, earnestly hoping that there were some, if only for the sake of comparing notes! Their interest in life was great, but they dreaded the rising of the fierce, tropic sun.

The second day began, and their spirits fell. The sun beat down upon them with an intensity that was almost insupportable, and their thirst was terrible. Some became delirious. The skin of their faces and hands peeled and cracked. The sea, however, was calmer, and the other rafts were still in view. How few the survivors were. Certainly not more than a quarter of the ship's company remained.

The second day passed and the sun crept slowly down towards the purple sea. Suddenly the captain leapt up and pointed towards the red gold orb.

"It's all right men," he cried, "there's smoke rising out there across the sun."

Soon the smoke was visible to all of them, and before daylight vanished the thin masts of an approaching

destroyer were seen. She came steadily towards them, and presently her camouflaged upper works hove in sight. Then the beat of her propellers was heard. A shrill whistle from her syren was greeted by a feeble cheer, for the survivors knew that they were seen. Another few minutes elapsed and then the graceful hull of a large United States destroyer showed broadside on as she stopped and lowered her boats.

The Irish first lieutenant gave vent to a cracked shriek, and seized the skipper's hand. The skipper looked at him apprehensively fearing that he had gone mad and that the rescuers had come too late for him at any rate; but the Irishman was merely in a hysteria of joy. He threw back his head and displayed a double row of strong white teeth, which contrasted strangely with the black, unshaven chin and the deep red bronze of his sun-baked face. He squeezed the captain's hand with what little strength remained to him, and, looking knowingly into his eyes, said:

"I'm glad the lobster kicked."

CHAPTER XVI

H.M.S. "ACTIVE"

No one who has not been intimately connected with convoys can properly appreciate the work of the mercantile marine. I remember how furious I was on receiving my appointment to H.M.S. *Active*; I might perhaps have commanded her before I ever reached the dignity of four stripes, when I was attached to the Dover Patrol, but I preferred at that time the more active employment with destroyers, which, with their greater speed and more continuous patrols, gave one a better chance to fall in with enemy vessels.

However, people do not make their own appointments in war time, or even in peace time for that matter. At the beginning of April, 1918, I joined the *Active* at Queenstown and weighed in with the new and important work of convoys. All the Allies owe those responsible for inaugurating the convoy system a debt of gratitude that it will be difficult to repay.

I spent some days studying the conduct of our sea borne supplies in convoys of slow ships, and in a very short time I realised that the Admiralty had selected the *Active* for this work because she was in every way suited for it. She was of over 25 knots speed and one could handle her like a picket boat. The *Active* was a sister ship to the *Saucy Arethusa* of Heligoland fame; she carried ten 4-inch guns, was of 3,440 tons displacement,

and was capable of steaming 4,260 miles without refuelling. Although she looked very much like a destroyer, she was over 400 feet long and many a time our own submarine fellows told me that they had mistaken her for one of the "Yankee" destroyers. The man I relieved in command of her was Captain Gordon Campbell, V.C., D.S.O., and never in my life have I walked on board a more efficient ship; so well were the officers and ship's company acquainted with their work that there never was any necessity for me to try and shake them up. In consequence I found that I had much time for myself and, previous to leaving with my first convoy, I had plenty of leisure to study the experience of others which was handed out to us by a well-organised Admiralty in what one may call "convoy tablets." The confidential books on the subject were made out in different languages and they contained such useful information, that when I met the skippers of my first lot of ships at a conference, I seemed to have everything at my finger's ends, after reading the books once through.

I took over command of the *Active* at Queenstown, and as my first convoys did not sail for something like three weeks from this date, I found myself with a certain amount of leisure and, what is more, I found myself again within the clutches of Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, who still commanded on the coasts of Ireland. I need hardly say that I profited tremendously by my second short period of service under this great British sailor; one never met him without learning something; one never left him without admiring him more, and when the *Active* finally sailed away to Berehaven and thence to Liverpool, I had a bubbling hope in my heart that it

would not be long before Admiral Bayly hooked me in again as a submarine hunter under his immediate supervision. Alas! this was not to be, for although, I believe, he made frequent application for my services, the *Active* was soon doing very good work escorting convoys of twenty to thirty ships upon the ocean highways and ensuring them of protection against gunfire attack by what can only be described as submarine cruisers.

Before leaving Queenstown we docked our ship and prefected her anti-submarine devices. There was a strike on at the time; I did not bother my head much on the subject; I only knew that a number of people were not working and their places were taken by smiling and willing sailors from His Majesty's ship *Active*, who were as anxious as the Admiral himself to get on with the war.

The *Active* was based on Gibraltar for the future, and her principal duty was to act as ocean escort to the slow convoys which I have already mentioned. We ran in harness with H.M.S. *Adventure* and the two American cruisers, *Birmingham* and *Chester*. I had a great number of officers in the *Active*, and no captain in this world was ever better served than I was in that ship. I had made up my mind to hate the *Active*, but without any exaggeration I may say that I loved her officers and men. They were a real fine lot; zealous, efficient, and smiling describes them very truly.

The convoy conduct was of vital importance to the Allies. We in the ocean escorts knew it, the merchant men knew it and the enemy knew it. For us in the *Active* it had its own peculiar adventure, which savoured of rat-hunting. No ship in the world could have been more suitable for the work than that which I com-

manded, she turned more easily than a destroyer and slithered through and around the convoys like a collie rounding up a flock of sheep. I became very enthusiastic over the convoy work, particularly no doubt on account of my admiration and affection for the senior service, the merchant service—I take it the ark was not a man-of-war. My association with the skippers, mates and engineers, with whom I came in contact, brought me back to my sub-lieutenant days when the monotony of peace-time navy drove me to the Antarctic as second mate of the relief ship *Morning*.

The first convoys I took consisted of larger ships than usual; in fact some of them were liners; but my subsequent flotillas of merchant ships for the most part consisted of 7-knot tramps, laden with coal or grain. In each convoy was a Commodore, usually an R.N.R. commander, and a vice-commodore, generally selected because he had seen much convoy service. The convoys were not confined to British and Allied ships, and so we frequently had Norwegians, Danes and Swedes with us. The conference of masters before we set out were just little sailor "at homes." The captains smoked their pipes and listened to the commodore and myself explaining our plans for the conduct of the slow-moving merchant fleet, which was about to embark on another "gauntlet" voyage. We always had a perfect understanding at these conferences; and, although I was in most cases the youngest skipper present, I was well-known to many of the captains already, for I had mixed with them in the uttermost corners of the earth. I had met some in New Zealand, some in Australia, while others I had travelled with to Cape Town, Ceylon and New York. Then there were Worcester boys with whom

I had been at school, and we all had a common object—to oust the hated Hun.

With so many different types of vessels, varying in speed, in shape and manœuvring qualities, the station keeping and alter-course movements were not always easy; but the intention throughout was to do our best and the result, as far as the merchant service was concerned in convoy work, was excellent.

I invariably promised at these conferences that if a ship were torpedoed her crew should be picked up. It was clear that with my twenty-five knots I could make things most unpleasant for the U boat, for I was full of anti-submarine appliances. Explaining matters to them, they soon realised the splendid manœuvring qualities of the *Active*. I accepted all the responsibility for collision, pointing out that I could hardly do less with such high power in a nut-shell; and it was definitely laid down at these conferences that the *Active* gave way to everything, which, considering her vastly superior speed, was certainly as it should be.

Admiral Duff had arranged for the convoys to be accompanied by one or two large patrol gunboats, of which nearly forty were constructed in 1917-18, and whenever available, one of these followed astern of the convoys to succour and save life if the occasion demanded it.

I thoroughly enjoyed my convoy time. It brought me new friends, new experiences, and developed new sympathies, for I widened my horizon of acquaintances and learnt to know still fresh types of the men who were winning the war. My knowledge of Danish and Norwegian gave me as friends such men as commanded the little steamers *Helge*, *Ruytenfjeld* and *Storfjeld*, all



A GROUP OF LOCAL "KNUTS" PHOTOGRAPHED BY QUEEN ELISABETH ON BOARD "LORD CLIVE"
IN DUNKIRK.

Norsemen with the real sea instinct and true sailor contempt for the German submarine and all its dirty ways. Many of the skippers with whom I came in contact had been torpedoed three times; and while at Milford, on one occasion a merchant captain came to the Admiral's office, fresh from a torpedoed ship with his clothes still wet upon him, and asked for another command. There is no need to emphasise one's enjoyment in working with men like these.

Looking back on that time, I often imagine myself breathing again the black coal smoke which filled my nostrils from the funnels of the rusty tramp steamers. The smoke was often wafted over my bridge as my dainty cruiser worked her way through the columns of crawling vessels as they gradually made their way over the face of the great waters. After each meeting with the masters one became more efficient and one's convoys were better ordered and controlled; after each voyage one learnt to appreciate better and better the admirable qualities of the men to whom I refer. The world owes them something!

There was little I could do for these people to make their lot a brighter one. I tried to think out everything, and I only hope I succeeded. If high spirits and enthusiasm count, we were not failures. We were full of buck in the *Active*. Whenever we hauled down a signal, the executive for carrying out the ordered movements was a cock-a-doodle-do on both syrens, and this would be repeated right through the convoy flotilla. We never made signals in the afternoon unless they were absolutely necessary, for there was much night work, and it was better that people should be undisturbed and allowed to get their heads down.

The convoys were worked entirely without lights. Speaking generally they were too slow to zig-zag, but fast ships if available, would zig-zag on the flanks and across the rear. The *Active* had no particular station; we kept clear of everybody and usually worked between the convoy and the sun, when its altitude was not great. And we zig-zagged around in a way that earned for me the name of the "zig-zag king." When there was any moon, we of course reversed the process, and got on the side of the convoy furthest from that celestial body.

Our signals were nearly always marked by their politeness, except when vessels showed lights at night, which I am glad to say was not often. When it did happen, I used to charge right through the convoy at full speed and getting quite close to the offending ship, make a series of toots and groans on fog-horns, syren and whistle. This may or may not have been the correct procedure, but it always had the effect of bringing the skipper to the end of the bridge in some kind of fright or rage. A short megaphone conversation would follow, the offending "glim" would be "doused," other men would look round their ships to make certain no lights were showing, the *Active* would slither away in the darkness, tranquillity would be restored, officers of watches would call for the requisite increase of speed to get back into station before they were found out by their now awakened skippers, and in a few minutes the panic would be over, night watchers would return surreptitiously to the solace of their pipes, and in the stillness of the night the thud, thud, thud of big propellers would faintly make itself heard, like the muffled ticking of a large clock.

When approaching and leaving the English and Irish

Channels, the convoys were accompanied by what was known as the danger zone escort. This meant that a number of mosquito craft buzzed round our flanks and across our path, and in this connection I may be pardoned if I mention Captain Frederic A. Whitehead, Captain Reginald Henderson and Paymaster Captain H. W. E. Manisty, who all contributed to the perfect convoy organisation with which it was such a pleasure to be associated. The danger zone escort varied very much, indeed my first convoy was escorted out into the Atlantic by five beautiful American destroyers of the most modern type. When approaching Gibraltar, I found to my dismay, that the destroyer escort which was to help us through the Straits was not worthy of the name. It was, nevertheless, all that the Admiral could give us. We were met there by three funny old steamers that could hardly keep up with the convoy (it happened to be a fast one). I signalled to them, "Where is destroyer escort," and when they replied, "We are," I was tempted to answer back, "Hitch on behind and we will tow you into port."

What a joy it was to arrive in Gibraltar, after the drearier patrols of more northern waters, with so much rain, gale and fog. The climate was exquisite. When I brought my little ship up to her buoy in the protected harbour, I received for the first time in the war the signal to let fires die out. The officer commanding at Gibraltar was Rear-Admiral Heathcoat S. Grant, C.B., who had lately been King's Harbourmaster and Rear-Admiral at Dover. He had under his command British, American, Brazilian, Italian, French, Japanese and Portuguese units, and I think they appreciated him as much as I did myself. He and his staff did all they possibly could

to study the comforts of the sea-going units, and in the whole time I was under his command, I was only once called upon to do any work outside of my own special convoy and patrol duty—it became necessary for me to sit on a court-martial. At Gibraltar we kept fit with plenty of tennis and swimming and, taking it all round, we generally got a week in England and five or six days at Gibraltar every month. It was a splendid rest cure.

Of my ship-mates in the *Active* I cannot speak too highly. I grew young in their company, and to command them was a pleasure. We had an invariable rule that no intoxicating drinks were ever allowed at sea, and on this account it never became necessary for me to lay down a special wine limit for anyone. I am a great believer in a glass of wine at times to gladden the heart of man, but I hope that any occasional references to gin and cock-tails will not lead my readers to suppose that the naval officer indulges much in alcohol.

The reaction and change from the more exacting duties of the Dover Patrol to the gentle and pleasurable convoy work in the vicinity of Gibraltar were certainly good for me as for the ship's company in general. Glorious weather and sunlit seas were a relaxation, and the increased leisure time here meant that we regained our pre-war physical fitness, for it must always be remembered that no amount of fresh air and sea time will compensate for the lack of good physical exercise to which we are accustomed in the Navy generally.

We escorted 182 ships in the *Active*. They were divided up into twelve convoys, and our record was nothing to be ashamed of. For our crest we had a tortoise, which was intended to be symbolical of our rate of progress; our losses were *nil*, our collisions *nil*, and

no convoy escorted by the *Active* was ever late on the pre-arranged rendezvous time. It seems a bit "blowy," but I would rather be able to say that than tell of gallant rescues of crews whose ships I had lost in my convoys by torpedo or collision. We certainly were lucky.

Here again my sleeping bag came in, but it was used under far more comfortable conditions than those which obtained on the *Active's* upper bridge, and at night I lay on my bridge in this, ready for any surprises. For the most part we were blessed with fine weather and I used to lie peacefully in my bag, with a glorious star-lit ceiling forming a canopy over me. Those delicious people, the *Active's* officers, studied me and my comforts as if I had been a pet Pekinese instead of a somewhat exacting captain. Orders seemed to be breathed rather than shouted down the voice-tubes, for they certainly never disturbed me, and I only knew of the change in watches by the difference in the officer's features silhouetted against the sky. The first and middle watches were kept by my two R.N.R. lieutenants, both of them splendid seamen, while Lieut. Despard, the first lieutenant, took on at 4 a.m. These three inspired me with confidence, and as far as the *Active* was concerned, the convoy business ran on cushion tyred wheels. At the least sign of a shower of rain a little awning was rigged over me by invisible signalmen, with deft fingers and noiseless tread. In short it was a good time to live through and one which left me only with affectionate memories of the "*Active's*," lock, stock and barrel.

We were always glad to see ships make a second and third appearance in our convoys, and the same may generally be said of the convoy commodores too. When I left Dover I wished for something more stirring than

the *Active*, and it was not my fault that we got no fighting in the little ship. At the same time I always avoided submarines with the convoys, and they could often be dodged by using the frequent submarine reports that we were furnished with by wireless from shore stations, men-of-war, and merchant ships. I am particularly glad to have won through without accident or hitch. When the Armistice was signed I wrote to Captain Whitehead about convoys and concerning my own affairs, and in my letter I said:

“For the *Active*, *Adventure*, *Birmingham* and *Chester* I can certainly speak, and I may say that we four skippers felt that everything was done for us (thanks to the Convoy Section and the Admirals of Gibraltar and Milford) to make our lot in this part of the war an exceedingly pleasant one. We have scarcely ever been called on to do anything outside our escort work. Our ships’ companies have been rested and given leave, and I can think of no suggestion for improvement beyond adding to the ocean escort the safeguard of one or two craft such as the ‘K’ class gunboats.

“I hope if you distribute any rewards, you will not neglect to remember the commanders of ‘K’ gunboats according to their work, bearing in mind this fact, that we in the cruisers have had good first lieutenants, good navigators, and a working proportion of really efficient watchkeepers.

“With all good wishes and a final word of appreciation of your own forethought and organisation, etc.”

The spirit of this chapter is a truly happy one, but one must not forget that my experience compels me to speak of the better weather. The transition from winter to summer itself made us all glad. The Armistice

came before we had had the dreadful winter buffetting that our friends in the little tramp steamers had experienced all through the war.

I never was much of an inventor, but I devised for graphic use in the ocean escorts and commodores' ships what was known as the tortoise board. This consisted of a large rectangular board on which were rows of small hooks. We had a box full of flat tortoises made of brass, with a hole through the head of each so that it could be hooked onto the board. On the back of each small tortoise was a white ground glass shape suitable for writing on in pencil. Each tortoise represented one of the ships in the convoy, and on receipt of the convoy papers it was the signal yeoman's duty to write the name, speed, distinguishing signal and port of destination of each ship on a tortoise's back. He then hooked them on to the board in representative fashion so that we had our convoy in miniature before us on the bridge. If a ship dropped out of station the signalman of the watch unhooked the tortoise and placed him on a peg indicating his changed position. Those zig-zagging on the flanks could be moved out of the general formation. The whole idea was that the convoy should present as broad a front as possible and very close station was kept. This prevented submarines from popping up in the centre of convoys and loosing off torpedoes in all directions. The tortoise board amused the officers of the watches, and it certainly gave them all the information they wanted; for example, if the speed of the convoy was seven knots and a 10-knot ship dropped out of the station, she was quickly hustled back by station-keeping signal, whereas if a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -knot ship dropped astern we were certainly more considerate and reduced the speed of the

convoy if, after a small megaphone conversation with her, we found she could not keep up.

Of the convoy commodores, the best known to me was Commander William H. Kelly, D.S.O., late of the Royal Mail Steam Ship Line. His convoys were always magnificently managed. Kelly was not a young man, but he was sea breeze and salt junk right through besides being very quick brained. Whenever we learned that he was to be our convoy commodore there was great joy in the *Active*. The convoy commodores, like the cabinet ministers, had their own peculiarities. Some of them were "dead nuts" on stellar observation, and one could see them at dawn stealing out to the bridge ends to stalk the twinkling star with their brass telescope sextants. The navigation was usually easy enough, but we left nothing to chance, and the star chasing commodores had no intention of bringing their convoys into the narrow waters without making the most of the navigational aid afforded them by the occasional appearance of a peeping star when a blue patch occurred in the skies. We did not have much clear weather as a rule when approaching Ireland. Outward bound it was different, and clear star-lit nights were frequent.

Kelly never took old, well-trained naval signalmen. Some commodores had a chief yeoman and many seasoned bunting-tossers; but Kelly carried round with him three or four signal boys, and when I expressed my surprise at the signal staff supplied to him, knowing to what he was entitled, he informed me that he preferred the youngsters, because they did not do what they thought, but what he told them. He said he was there to talk to merchant seamen, and being a merchant seaman himself he was well able to do it in his own salt

water way. There is no doubt Kelly had his signal boys trained to perfection. Whenever we made a message to him, the answering pennants fluttered in response, for those boys had eyes like hawks. I shall look out for them in the future.

As may be gathered from this dissertation on convoys, we in the ocean escorts were hardly over-worked. The *Active* had a good long quarter deck and we had plenty of opportunity for keeping fit at sea. We used to play our own kind of medicine ball, which was after the fashion of tennis. We had a high net rigged up, four played at once and we tossed a ball weighing 30 pounds over this net and back again until we were wet through with perspiration. Sometimes we had shilling tournaments, which all helped to disperse the monotony of being some days at sea. Lieut. Bryant, R.N.R., who was a first-class sailmaker, always made the medicine balls for us, but they were not made in a minute. One one occasion I remember he had worked all day to get one completed, and when it made its appearance in the dog watches on our "tennis courts," it was greeted with shouts of admiration. But the shouts turned to groans when it disappeared over the side owing to a somewhat lusty heave in an unprotected direction. It was too much for me; I rushed up on to the bridge, hauled out astern of the convoy, called away the lifeboat's crew, stopped the ship and picked it up. So much for the protection afforded by the ocean escort! In justice to myself, I must add that I knew there had been no submarine reports in our neighbourhood for some time. However, like other people, I had laid myself open to criticism if the facts of the case leaked out. I resorted to subterfuge. I hoisted the signal RJE VIF, which indicates

"man saved," so that any nervous gentleman in the crowd of ships about us might pardon us for stopping and lowering a boat when in this dreadful danger of being submarined. Up went all the little answering pennants and such was the friendly feeling prevailing in the convoys that the little Danish steamer *Helge* hoisted DZA (Allow me to congratulate you).

1918 was the year of rations and ration cards. I remember bringing an enormous ship, the *Argyllshire*, along in one of the small, fast convoys, and with her were five other ships, each one of which carried enough meat to give every individual in the United Kingdom a pound. I believe the *Argyllshire* was also full of frozen beef, and she could have more than done the same. The ships and their cargoes all got through safely to old England, and therefore that one little lot represented as much as all the meat coupons of our country for a month. The safe delivery of homeward convoys always left one cheered, and when we anchored off Pembroke or in Plymouth Sound, we had a glad feeling that we had helped to replenish the empty larder of those we loved and worked for.

Long before the armistice was signed, the gradual but very marked decrease in the submarine sinking showed us that the menace no longer existed seriously. In May, 1918, the Allies sunk or finally put out of action no less than sixteen enemy submarines, and although that number does not represent the monthly average for the year, it indicates that the submarine danger had been overcome, that the Allies were not to be starved out, and that we were keeping the seas.

Having fairly mastered the subject of convoy work thanks to the efficiency of the merchant men themselves,

and the clear simple regulations and advice given in convoy memoranda, I found myself with very little to do when the *Active* came into harbour at the end of her escort trips. I therefore turned my attention to the lighter pleasure of picnics, summer football matches and any old thing that came along. We got to know a lot of people at Gibraltar and quickly turned our ship into a kind of Pickford's van. The families of those stationed at the Rock Fortress were practically cut off from the land, for parcel mails through Spain and France were quite impossible, and the opportunity of sending and receiving packages to and from England was of rare occurrence, unless the services of friendly men-of-war were utilised. Consequently, it was no usual thing for me to bring out a cabin-full of ladies' hats, skirts and underclothes, and I even purchased such things as patent leather shoes for the ladies at Gibraltar. My wife, fortunately, saw eye to eye with me in the matter, and realising the plight of the English colony, she used to do any amount of shopping for the ladies on the Rock. I am glad to say our combined efforts never landed us into incurring the displeasure of those we were trying to assist. We took all sorts of things out in the ship and we brought all kinds of things home. We got raisins, oranges, figs, dates, grapes, and melons from Gibraltar, beautiful cane chairs from Madeira, and even casks of port from Portugal and Spain. These articles were only carried in officers' cabins, which were never used at sea, when on principle we kept ourselves above the upper deck in order to be ready for action at all times. I remember once taking out a toy engine for the wife of a commander who had a three-year-old son. I brought this up in a carroge with many other things and landed

at the house she shared with the wife of the naval secretary, looking like Father Christmas, so laden was I with stores. I unloaded the engine from the little carriage, and wheeling it before me, was met by a little child. It was the daughter of the secretary, a little girl of two. She immediately fell in love with the engine and would not be separated from it until its lawful owner appeared on the scene. This little boy seized the engine and the baby girl was left screaming. It is difficult to please everybody. I had all sorts of adventures with this engine, travelling back to my departure port by crowded midnight train. However, I was not out to be defeated by these two children and that afternoon I called my painter and joiner together on board the *Active* and explained to them the *impasse* that had arisen in the Admiral's secretary's house. All sailors love children, and these two appreciated the difficulty of the situation. Within forty-eight hours these two kindly sailor-men had constructed a toy engine, enamelled green and red, brass-mounted and with glass window ports. The engine was labelled "Active" in beautiful letters of bronze, and when completed it put the professional toy to shame. Some of the *Active's* officers took it up to the secretary's house with the best and most generous intentions in the world. But we failed, miserably; for when the first kid compared his engine with the beautiful amateur article fashioned on my ship, he was overcome by a furious fit of jealousy, and in spite of all our good intentions we left both children fighting and crying fit to break their hearts.

Whenever the *Active* spent a Sunday in Gibraltar, the captain and officers gave a children's party, and the biggest children of all were the "Actives" themselves.

We usually borrowed the Admiral's barge and towed the ship's dinghy, laden with food and water, to the picnic rendezvous. If the picnic was a large one, we took the *Blue Bird*, as our steamboat had been christened, in addition to the barge. Although we called these picnics "children's parties" they were really Sunday outings for the prettiest girls in Gibraltar. We used to love these days. The dark blue and white enamelled barge was a magnificent steamboat, with shinning brass bell-mouthed funnel. The bright work on her was wonderful to look at. The young girls used to crowd on to her deck at the Ragged Staff steps at the appointed hour; and in their pretty gauzy dresses and dainty summer headgear they seemed to give the boat the appearance of a basketful of carnations.

The "Actives" for these occasions discarded their naval uniforms and appeared at the landing stage carrying the objects requisite for the picnic. These always included a gramophone and records, bathing gear, a water polo ball, another ball for rounders, and a number of golliwog dolls, teddy bears and penguins—the prizes for the rag-time sports in which the party proposed to indulge.

Everybody from the ship was there, except the officers whose day on it was, and they would give us word of greeting as we passed by the ship on our way to Algeciras or Sandy Bay, according to the spot we had chosen on the Spanish mainland.

The admiral's secretary's wife chaperoned the "children." Skinner, the secretary, had lately been at Dover and we often contrasted these joyful times with the dark days of Dover. Although we were a good deal at sea in the *Active*, we appreciated the difference between

sea-keeping on a cruiser and tripping merrily across the five miles stretch of sun-lit sea that lies between Gibraltar and Sandy Bay. Sailors are only men after all, and we can be pardoned, perhaps, by those stern people, who think that we all should have been gloomy throughout the war, for spending our Sundays in harbour in such a joyful fashion.

The "Actives" picnics were very well organised affairs. Several sailors came along with us, glad to get a day in the country and these men took charge of the commissariat. While the picnic party were bathing in the beautiful clear seas, they laid out the long white table-cloth, which they spread with seamanlike forethought on a big boat's awning, to keep the sand clear of the mess-traps. When the picnickers had had their lunch, the sailors feasted on what was left, and after a reasonable smoking interval, themselves plunged into the cool sea.

Those bright summer days were oases in our lives, far away as we were from thoughts of war, from the sadness of those now almost daily sights, from those pitiful-looking survivors, wounded and maimed for life. One forgot for a time the wide-eyed, terror-stricken children some of us had seen in Belgium, we forgot that there were such things as broken-hearted women wailing over their dead; and when, as occasionally it did, a convoy of camouflaged ships passed on the southern horizon, we only pointed out to them and laughed gleefully as we dodged the water polo ball and sank our sun-browned bodies into the kindlier sea, the sea of a country at peace.

The admiral at Gibraltar never left for such pleasure trips as these, though his three little girls often came with us. We did our best to get him away from the

Rock, but in this we were not successful. He encouraged us and all his keepers of the seas to get what pleasure we could during our days in port. The picnics were medicine for those in the patrol craft particularly, and we often were joined in these outings by men from the motor-launches and small destroyers based on Gibraltar.

I had an old chief petty officer pal who sometimes steered the steamboat, and I had many a yarn with him concerning the war as carried on in the different parts of the earth. The old coxswain had lost his only son in the Dover Patrol; he himself was half blind, but out to do his best to help the show along, and release a younger man. He appreciated how much good it would do these young men to have a day away from war, and as he smoked his pipe or my cigars and boiled the water for the bovril or cocoa that the bathers were to drink in our very well organised picnic, we talked of the losses by gun, by mine, night attack and collision on ink black nights in the distant Dover Patrol. Perhaps the coxswain thought of these as he watched the brilliant coloured bathing caps, white arms and pretty shoulders of those who came out as our guests, and the old man was glad to see this children's party so happy in its way.

This man was typical of what the navy produces. He was one of nature's gentlemen and on such days as these of which I speak, I felt more like a son to the old fellow than one holding the dignified position of captain in His Majesty's Navy.

The picnic parties continued right into the afternoon, when quaint sports were organised. All manner of games were played, more bathing, more games, tea and still more games, even to dancing on the shore to the now somewhat gritty tunes of the gramophone as the sand

grains were kicked into its mechanism and onto the records. And then home, by romantic moonlight, a happy and tired little party would go back across the calm summer sea. It was exquisite pleasure to us, and to me personally the wrinkled smile of the old coxswain at the polished brass wheel, peering through his little slits of eyes, was the greatest pleasure of all, for it was obvious that he loved it as much as we did ourselves.

Songs would be called for, but volunteers were not usually forthcoming until Lieut. Bryant, R.N.R., our local "Old Bill," came to the rescue in his welcome way with all the sea "chanties" that he knew; so the *Blue Bird's* propellers beat and churned the quiet salt water to the glad chorus of such ditties as—

" Away—ay—aie—oh,
Away—ay—aie—oh,
Sing fare thee well
My bonny young gal
For I'm off to the Rio Grande."

The picnic party would break up at the Ragged Staff steps and the men would say good-bye to the beautiful flowers that had abolished war for the day. They would watch them out of sight as they faded away, crowded into the carriages and the admiral's motor-car, which took them to their homes. And then the "Actives" would have a wardroom supper in which their skipper joined, and thoroughly tired out, would sleep one peaceful night before putting out again to sea, lulled into dreamland by the metallic clink of the cable as its links stretched out and fell back against the buoy to which we rode.

Spain was a happy hunting ground for the German and his propaganda, and although I can raise plenty of enthusiasm about this beautiful old-world land, I do

not propose to ask my readers to believe that the Spaniards helped England or the Allies much during the great war. No doubt the Germans could tell us some interesting stories concerning the use they made of the Hispanian coast line and territorial waters. In the vicinity of Gibraltar the Spaniards appeared to be pro-Ally rather than pro-German, but it was no uncommon thing for us to meet a lot of Huns in Algeciras. There was no mistaking them with their round Teuton heads and close-cropped hair. They always talked loudly in German, but I never heard of any fracas between the Allies and the Germans who came across one another in Spain. This was just as well for none of us were anxious to be interned, and we were there on sufferance.

I brought home quite a number of German officers and men, prisoners of war from sunken submarines. They varied tremendously. We had a very nasty piece of work in the shape of Kapitanleutenant —, a well-known murderer with a very bad reputation. He was of the true Prussian type, arrogant and insolent. One of our surgeons went to his cabin to see that he was properly provided with bedding and good food on the day we left Gibraltar, where he had been embarked. This fellow was most insolent to the doctor and he had the audacity to insist on being given beer or wine to drink with his dinner. I very soon set his mind at rest on the subject.

We had another submarine captain on board at the same time, a lieutenant called Lauerberg, of quite a different type. He was a tall, clean-limbed sailor from the Baltic shore and we knew how clean his record had been, if one can call any German submarine captain's record clean. It was very difficult to exercise the

German prisoners while we were with our convoy. We had no wish for them to see how convoys were conducted and therefore it was necessary for them to take their exercise during the dark hours.

On reaching the destroyer rendezvous we were ordered in the *Active* to leave the convoy and proceed to Milford Sound at full speed, and once detached from the group of tramps and small steamers that formed our convoy, there was no need to keep the German prisoners under decks any longer. Lauerberg was allowed up on to the bridge as he had behaved extremely well during the homeward voyage. It was really the only cinder-free spot whilst we were advancing at 25 knots. I rather liked the look of him, and although I purposely refrained from putting any questions to him, he ventured a few remarks in tolerably good English and expressed thanks to me for the considerate treatment. He also told me what ships he had sunk and how he had destroyed them; and the less I asked him the more he told me, until at last I had heard the whole of his family history. He had been first lieutenant to the distinguished German submarine captain Arnaud de la Perriere, who was celebrated in naval circles as a dashing and splendid fighter. It was Lauerberg's captain who put up a fine gunnery duel against one of the ocean escorts between England and Gibraltar late in 1918. He was the German who disdained to torpedo merchant ships without warning. He worked his submarine practically as a cruiser and had with him one or two expert gun-layers from the High Seas Fleet. In place of torpedoes he carried an equivalent weight in 4.1-inch shell and cartridges. De la Perriere was, I believe, an Alsatian, he certainly was a sportsman, and although he

probably did more damage to Allied shipping than any other German naval officer, his name was spoken of with respect by those who kept the seas. It is a pleasure to write of a gallant adversary. He put up some splendid fights, and, if Lauerberg is to be believed, almost risked his ship in his endeavours to save the lives of non-combatant seamen. A naval officer who speaks with some authority told me that, having got into wireless communication with De la Perriere, one of our own ships signalled to him, "Come over on our side."

Lauerberg was telling me some of these things concerning the sinking of merchant ships and the rewards given by the Kaiser for such services, when suddenly the conning tower of a submarine was sighted in the distance. I turned to Lauerberg and told him he must go down below, and his escort was about to march him away, when I saw he had something to say. So I informed him that if we were torpedoed I should be compelled to shoot him, lest any information should be given by him to the enemy, in the event of his recapture. Lauerberg shrugged his shoulders and I laughingly added that I had no fear of submarines, and that if I was successful in sinking the fellow we had sighted, I should give him a cock-tail when we arrived in port. This seemed to brighten him up a bit and he left the bridge consoled. The U boat proved to be the U.S. submarine A.L., 2, and old friend of mine with whom I exchanged greetings. I sent for Lauerberg again when we had passed and let him have a little fresh air. I also gave him some tea, now that I knew he was a disciple of De la Perriere. However, no sooner had he had this little meal than another submarine appeared, which I thought must surely be a German. I could not help laughing

at Lauerberg, who appreciated the humour of the situation. Down he went again and we went full speed to the attack; again we were disappointed in our prey, for it turned out to be an upturned sea-plane, on which were two young flying officers. Once more Lauerberg was allowed to escape to witness their salvation. I told him not unkindly, that one of the first laws at sea was to save life, which of course he already knew. I also informed him that I should pick these two people up and if we were torpedoed he would probably lose his life, whereas if we saved these men, my joy would be so great that I would share my happiness with him and give him the whisky and soda which on principle I could not drink at sea. Lauerberg thought it a great joke. We saved the men and he got his drink, and as he laughingly put it away he told my steward he hoped we would see some more upturned sea-planes very quickly.

These two young Air Force officers had been three days and three nights without food. They were quite exhausted, but could still speak. They knew very little about ships, for they mistook the *Active* for the *Mauretania*, and when asked why, one of them said he thought she was the only ship in the world that had four funnels. Imagine how our pride fell when, some days later we saw the picture of these young officers in the *Daily Mirror*, and that journal stated that they had been rescued in the Irish Channel by a *destroyer*. Evidently the *Active* 'fell some' in the interval.

I heard rather a good story in the *Active* about a hard-hearted cook and a little rat of a seaman who had joined for hostilities. The cook insisted on the dinners, when made up ready for cooking, being handed in at the galley by 8 o'clock in the morning. The little rat

came late and proudly displayed a sea-pie on which he had fashioned in wonderful sticks of paste "No. 16 mess." The cook scowled at him and when the youthful seaman apologised, shouted at him, "I can't cook that, I can't cook that. Look at the clock, it is too late. I can't cook that." The youngster set the pie at the cook's feet and retired out of range, then turning with great impudence, "No cookie. I know you can't cook it. But give it its time."

During the summer of 1918 it became necessary for the Admiral at Gibraltar to send one of his ships to Madeira for a certain service, and we had the good fortune to be detached from one of the convoys going westward across the Atlantic, to visit this garden island. The Madeira of peace times is one of the most fertile islands on the surface of the globe, and even in war time our despicable foe could not change its fertility or spoil it in any way. It is true that an enemy submarine had one morning visited Funchal, where it torpedoed certain ships lying at anchor in the bay and carried out a bombardment of the small, weakly fortified town. It was after all only a bit of show work to terrorise the inhabitants and to give German newspapers and the neutral press a half column on the subject of German sea-power. The submarine bombardment had little or no effect on the *morale* of the people of Madeira. They continued at their peaceful occupations with the same firmness of purpose that has always obtained in this beautiful island.

When the *Active* arrived at Madeira it was nearly dark, for although we had no fear of enemy submarines I was not prepared to hazard a useful ship like mine when it was unnecessary. We remained therefore off Funchal only during the hours of darkness, and while the ship

lay at anchor the *Blue Bird*, armed with depth charges and bomb lances, patrolled in the offing. She was assisted by a motor launch, and it was made clear to me that the ship was invisible against the high background of the mountainous island.

A number of Madeira men surrounded the ship immediately after her arrival, and they exchanged the beautiful wicker chairs produced by the islanders for suits of clothing and other articles which were then unpurchaseable there. Clothing was almost impossible to obtain during the latter part of the war, for nothing but a small mail-boat ran between Madeira and Lisbon at this time.

A great number of tunney are caught by the native fishermen, and we were glad to purchase a quantity of these, which are excellent dried or put up in tins. I shall never forget our visit to Madeira. I was not likely to, for I had tinned tunney for breakfast for fourteen days on end, since eggs and other suitable breakfast dishes were difficult to obtain from Gibraltar and the other ports we visited during the latter half of 1918.

On the 8th November, 1918, the *Active* sailed as ocean escort for her twelfth convoy, which consisted of twelve moderate sized ships. It was touch and go for us whether we should leave England at all, for the Armistice was about to be signed. Knowing this, and that the German submarines would have their last chance to sink and murder and defile the laws of decent human beings, we in the *Active* were more alert than ever, for we thoroughly appreciated that the day of the Prussian was past and that the sun was setting for ever for the U boat pirate and all his kind. It was to me the most anxious three days of the war, and even after

the Armistice was signed and thousands of wireless telegraphy instruments gladly sparked the news to those of us who were at sea, following our profession, I felt that it was necessary to continue with the same vigilance as I had always exercised before hostilities ceased, for I could not trust the enemy even after he had signed. We knew him too well. Although he was beaten fairly and finely by those who stood shoulder to shoulder and fought to the end for fairness and justice, we had seen too much of starving seamen, of corpses in open boats, and of neutral seamen who had rightly followed their calling at sea, stark staring mad with thirst and hardship when we rescued them. We kept our people ready, our look-outs watching and the men at their stations until the *Active* finally made her way back to England to pay off her crew and demobilise those very excellent fellows who had only joined for the war.

I was indeed sorry I had never taken the little ship into action with the splendid fellows who supported me in her. The *Active* was the only ship that I commanded that I never took into action, I do not count of course the *Seymour*, which I only joined for passage, as it were.

Three days after the news of the Armistice was received, I was ordered to disperse my convoy and proceed to our base port at Gibraltar. We intercepted signals and we received information at this time that made it clear that Germany was being counted out and that the detested submarines were returning home on the surface, shouting "kamarad," as it were. We passed one in Gibraltar Strait with lights burning, two hours before dawn, and if I was guilty of any softening in my heart, perhaps it was then that I felt it. I remem-

ber my thoughts as we steamed close by her—what was she going home to?

An hour or so later we had passed through the Strait and just before six in the morning, dropped anchor off the port. Gibraltar was so full of ships that there was no room for us inside. It didn't matter now, for the war danger was over. I had a cup of cocoa in the ward-room and smoked a cigarette with the night watchers and the navigator, and then I made my way aft into my cabin where, for the first time since July, 1914, I undressed properly and turned into my bed, although in an open anchorage.

The captious critic can say and think precisely what he likes, but as my head lay on the soft, clean pillow I put up a few words of prayer and thanked God that I had done my job honestly through the war. I noticed something wet and salt was trickling into my mouth and for the moment I felt ashamed. I switched on the light and recognised that it was only one of Old Neptune's little jokes—a few drops of spray had come through my scuttle to remind me of the sea patrols.

CHAPTER XVII

A BRAZILIAN COAST PATROL

THOSE of you who have read the chapter on "Bicky and the Big Guns" will recollect that I playfully talked about satellites and assassins I collected during the war; one of these I came across accidentally in a bar—a very respectable bar, it is true, but that is where I met him. His charming personality quickly commended itself to me, and in the course of conversation I learnt that we had common friends. I also learnt that the young man in question, Lieut. C. H. Pullen, R.N.V.R., was more than a master of the Portuguese language.

Some people make opportunities; some seize opportunities; while others cannot help themselves, they seem to trip and fall down on opportunities. I think I must be one of these, for here was the man I wanted. I had that day been ordered to Lisbon for the purpose of showing the flag; in other words, my dainty little cruiser was to make her appearance at the capital of Portugal, our oldest naval ally, to cement the Entente and to show courtesy and good feeling to our friends the Portuguese, as soon as possible after the signing of the Armistice.

The "Actives" were not blessed with the gift of tongues, some of us had a kind of bowing acquaintance with French, and I fancied myself as a perpetrator of the Scandinavian languages, but here at hand ready to be plucked was the very flower we wanted to be the

lily of the bouquet I proposed to hand to the Portuguese. Pullen was splendid and nothing if not an opportunist. In December, 1918, he was attached to the Brazilian naval squadron commanded by Rear-Admiral Pedro de Frontin, in the capacity of liaison officer and interpreter. Whilst thoroughly happy and at home with his Brazilian naval friends, Pullen had tucked away in the bottom of his heart a great feeling of affection for Portugal and all that was Portuguese, and perhaps a hankering after the greater joys of Lisbon, compared with the more simple joys of Gibraltar.

It took us "one cock-tail minute" to frame our plans; no sooner had the last drop of the appetising beverage disappeared from our tiny glasses, than telephone bells were tinkling, naval secretaries were being interested, and in less time than it takes to tell, both the British and the Brazilian Admirals had consented to the rape of the liaison officer. Long before the good-hearted, gold-bound gentlemen had regretted their sudden consent, the *Active* was speeding westward through Gibraltar Straits and the iron-bound fortress of Gibraltar was being blotted out in the coal-black smoke cloud that trailed astern.

I soon found that Pullen was one after my own heart, he had the face of an angel and the heart of a wasp. He was equal to anything, and although he appeared to be but a boy of twenty, he was nearly double that age, and had let no moss grow on him.

In September, 1914, Pullen found himself at Rio de Janeiro. He was in business on his own account, but, like every true Britisher, he felt the call to arms. Being a level-headed fellow, he quickly realised that his local knowledge and perfect Portuguese were an asset to the

Allies, and instead of rushing away to be turned down on account of possible physical disabilities by a somewhat eclectic War Office, he got into touch with the late Admiral Craddock, who then commanded our naval forces in the South Atlantic.

Sir Christopher Craddock appreciated Pullen's offer to become an additional member of the local intelligence staff, and he received orders to travel on the north coast of Brazil, along the unfrequented routes, and to keep H.M. ships informed whenever possible of any enemy activity which he might observe or hear about. There were, of course, the possibilities of the Germans establishing fuel depôts for submarines and above-water craft, besides which Pullen, with his extraordinary local knowledge could notify the navy if he discovered that the Kaiser's auxiliary cruisers and other vessels were making use of the unfrequented creeks, river mouths and harbours along the northern Brazilian coast.

Of course the best way of gathering this information suggested itself to Pullen immediately, that is, by means of making patrol cruises with fishermen in thier boats living with them, talking with them, and dressing like them. It needed a considerable amount of grit to see this business through and Pullen, I am glad to say, had more than the requisite amount.

To start with he cruised along the coast line of over 1,400 miles from Pernambuco to Para at the mouth of the Amazon in open boats, accompanied by divers numbers of Brazilian fishermen, who were for the most part negroes. It is doubtful whether his adventures would ever have seen the light of publicity, for he is an extremely modest man, but the atmosphere of the sea is poetical,

and once I had dragged Pullen from the quiet shelter of the overhanging rock fortress of Gibraltar, his sea instincts quickened once again and he remained with me on my little cruiser's bridge for hour after hour, listening to my stories and telling me some of his. He knew I had been an explorer and perhaps that is why he unburdened himself of some of his adventures, which to me were priceless gems of sea patrols and which I will try hard to remember and to set down as he gave me them.

This long stretch of 1,400 miles, although thoroughly explored, was not visited by many strangers during the war excepting perhaps the larger towns of Natal, Ceara and Maranham. Straying from Rio de Janeiro, Pullen made his way to Pernambuco, purposely allowing himself to get shabbier and shabbier, letting his beard grow and permitting his hands to brown and crack in the sun. Arrived at the latter port and having refreshed his memory as to the position of certain interned German steamers, he got into touch with the owner of his first canoe. Money, as far as bargaining was concerned, had no value whatever, but after sundry drinks and a certain amount of cajolery, Pullen persuaded "Joao" to take him the 180 miles which made the first stage of his trip. This brought him to Cabedello, a small whaling station, where three German ships had taken refuge and were now lying interned. These ships were sending wireless messages out and causing local gossip which penetrated into certain parts of Brazil, as to their intentions and possible hostile action. Pullen nosed around and soon had separated the facts from the fiction, and it may be pretty correctly assumed that he was right when he reported that there was nothing but bluff being put up, with

the possible idea of keeping our activities somewhere in this direction and leading us away from the trail of bigger game. He appears to have been very thorough in everything he did, but in order to achieve this thoroughness he fell in with some nasty experiences. Watching the German steamers *Persia*, *Minneberg* and *Salamanca*, Pullen found himself on some nights camping on the hill-side without fire, with little food but green cocoa-nuts and nothing to drink but their milk. He could not lie on the burnt-up grassland of the hill-side for fear of the poisonous snakes which abounded in this particular district. He therefore spent the hours of darkness slung in a native hammock between two mango trees, almost eaten alive by myriads of mosquitoes. Our young friend, who had never roughed it in his life before, put up with unutterable miseries, but soft though his skin may have been his heart was tough enough to treat the attendant hardships with disdain.

Having obtained the requisite information concerning the aforesaid steamers, Pullen shuffled off to his canoe once more and covered big distances either by sea or by trudging, limping or riding according to the nature of the coast and country. He reached Macau just before Christmas, 1914, a good deal the worse for wear. At Macau the hot weather was at its height, the fierce Brazilian sun struck down on his back and shoulders as he travelled until poor Pullen was a mass of sores and blisters. Quite oblivious of the hardships which he had to face, he made his way along the coast line to Caicara, a distance which he laughingly described as "not far, about six days' riding." He was unaccustomed to riding and soon became saddle-sore; he was in such a sorry plight when he arrived at Caicara that he was too hurt

and burnt to lie down, so he spent four nights in this unvisited place crouched in a canvas deck chair, which he managed to obtain.

Caicara is a fishing village, of say 350 inhabitants, and from what Pullen told me, it is safe to say that every single one of them paid him the doubtful compliment of calling on him to inspect. The natives chattering round in Portuguese, disgusted him with their garlic-charged breath, which permeated his nostrils almost like poison gas; their staccato notes grated on his ear-drums and their dirty fingers touched him all over, caressing him and pinching him to satisfy their curiosity for hours at a time. Pullen had no respite after his weary six days' mule ride. Even when the natives forsook him, he was not alone, for the mosquitoes soon found him out in his chair and stabbed him into what can only be described as a scarlet conglomeration of swellings.

German colliers appeared and re-appeared off this fishing village, evidently anticipating a meeting with Von Spee. Pullen boarded one of these vessels in his rôle of Dago fisherman and obtained the information that the colliers had come to coal the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, and other German cruisers. The collier captain and officers interrogated all fishermen and although they treated them with scorn, it was obvious that they feared a meeting with English ships.

Having found out what he could from the collier *Patagonia*, Pullen continued his trip northward, living under the same conditions of beastliness, until he arrived at Maranham, where he dispatched a cipher telegram to the British Legation at Rio, giving the information obtained by him up to date and advising that he was

about to commence the last part of his trip, which was to the Sao Joao group of islands, lying about 80 miles off the Brazilian coast.

Before Lieut. Pullen arrived at Maranham he had an amusing experience which I cannot fail to put into this chapter. At practically every village he visited, he was stared at and surrounded by the inhabitants, who treated him as an object of interest. At Formosa he divided honours in this respect with a travelling priest, who on the principle of "cash down and no tick" eased his guilty conscience by baptising, marrying and confessing at the different villages he visited. He was a friendly creature and allowed Pullen to share a hut with him. The two slung their hammocks together as day drew to its close, and when Pullen had allowed the priest an hour in which to say his prayers and undress, he followed suit, but for some time was unable to sleep on account of the ecclesiastical snores. Nevertheless he fell asleep at last, leaving the kerosene flare burning, but suddenly awoke to find his reverend companion examining the contents of his dispatch case, which Pullen had left by his hammock. Divested of his official garb, the priest was not a pretty object, in fact he looked very much like a common cut-throat. The Englishman thought it best to keep quiet, and accordingly kept on breathing steadily, watching the Brazee through half-closed eyes. Having finished with the despatch case, the priest turned his attention to Pullen's prism glasses, but after examining them he put them down and returned to his hammock. After resting there a couple of minutes, the holy man got up again and, taking the binoculars, passed with them behind the division which sub-divided the hut, then went to bed again, and was

soon asleep and snoring. The opportunity was too good for Pullen, who quickly slipped from his net hammock, to retrieve not only his prism glasses, but some chocolate bars, a pot of oxo, and other articles which had been extracted by the priest from his despatch case and hidden in the pouches of the latter's saddle. After that the Englishman slept with the replenished despatch case in his hammock.

The next morning Pullen left early, but the Brazilian priest was nothing if not friendly, and insisted on seeing the Englishman away, offering him his blessing previous to his departure. Pullen could not help taking the binoculars out to gaze at some distant object. The priest's face was a sight for sore eyes; he said nothing, however, and the impression he left with Pullen was that his reverence was undecided as to whether the Englishman possessed one or two pairs of glasses. The position for Pullen was somewhat uncomfortable; had he accused the priest of stealing his goods, he would most likely have been murdered, for the incident took place at a wild coast village, where the influence of an unscrupulous priest would easily have been used to arouse the fears of the superstitious inhabitants against a suspicious stranger in their midst.

From Maranham, Pullen commenced the last stage of his journey, bound as previously stated for the Sao Joao islands. It is safe to say that no Englishman had ever landed on these islands, and when he did so, Pullen took his life in his hands. Absolutely unarmed, he made his way to a settlement on the mainland, from which he obtained the services of a little sailing boat, manned by two half-caste native fishermen. The boatmen spoke and understood only Portuguese, and after much

argument and discussion they agreed to land the Englishman on the biggest island; but they declared that nothing would induce them to land themselves; they asserted that the inhabitants of the Sao Joao group were "feroes," who would most certainly attack them.

Quite undeterred, Pullen persisted, and after five days and five nights in the little boat, living on dried prawns and mangoes, of which they carried five hundred, he and his half-caste friends appeared off the hostile islands. Commands, entreaties, and promises were futile; nothing would induce the two Josés to remain an instant longer near the island than was necessary to put poor Pullen ashore. The natives selected a little point of land where it was clear of trees, and there was no chance of being rushed by the "feroes," and after cruising off and on for some time, and making quite sure that there was no ambush, the steersman suddenly put the helm up, ran the boat on to the beach; they then threw out Pullen's two bags and pushed him out after them. The sail was quickly lowered, and the two half-castes with feverish haste, thrust the boat off from the land, using long fishermen's poles. Once clear, they hoisted their big blue sail and the boat heeled over and was shortly a mere speck, silhouetted against the setting sun. Poor old Pullen—he described his feelings to me one night on the *Active's* bridge—loneliness was not in it. He felt afraid. No wonder. For, as he said, it wasn't a nice feeling—unarmed, night falling and little flitting shadows moving from tree to tree. It was no good being frightened though, for Pullen could only die once. He moved up towards some smoke, which was presumably the site of the settlement which he had

heard about from the half-castes. Occasionally he got a glimpse of a running man, first to the right then to the left — there must have been several of them. As he advanced towards the smoke it soon became apparent that his arrival had been heralded by his nervous fellow-creatures, if such they can be called.

I cannot do better here than insert a description of what followed, taken from one of Pullen's letters written to his mother. I am glad to have his permission to do so, for it will bring out better than any second-hand description of mine what actually happened on the Sao Joao islands. I am perfectly certain that my readers will find this extract of absorbing interest, and it will probably strike them as it has struck me, that if men like Pullen can be found, trained to business, expert in foreign languages, ready and willing as he was to serve their country in her greatest need, we Britons and Allies who have kept the seas, need never fear another serious attempt at subjection and world domination by our friends the enemy. Thank God we have such men as these and the Navy is proud to enrol them. Here is the quotation from the letter:—

“ The settlement on Sao Joao Island which I reached, consisted of a collection of about 400 grass huts, all built exactly alike and picturesquely grouped around a dirty open square. A larger hut covered with corrugated iron sheets was obviously the local pub, and towards this I made tracks, supremely self-conscious that I was being watched by the entire *élite* of the island, who, however, made no response to my somewhat forced attempt at cheery greetings, as I endeavoured to look as pleased as possible and carry as much “abandon” as circumstances would permit. Standing and squatting all

round the entrance to the huts were the quaintest collection of human beings I think I have ever seen. The majority of them wore only a pair of shorts fastened below the knee with dried grass, but there were one or two in every five decently clothed in shirt and trousers made of sail cloth. They were all very powerfully built, their bodies were of a curious dark red brick hue and their faces a sickly yellowish colour, this jaundiced look being caused by their exaggerated fish diet. Their necks were protected by a mass of long, smooth, black hair, which fell down to their shoulders.

I saw no women, and it is curious to relate that during the whole time I remained on the island, I very rarely saw one. Naked children and pigs swarmed all over the place. I kept my head pretty high during the walk across the square, and took off my large sun hat to fan myself and to show I really felt at home, although as a matter of fact my heart was somewhere near where my boots should have been, but their apology, in the shape of a very soiled pair of tennis shoes now hung round my neck.

Unaccustomed as they were to seeing a stranger of any description, my presence in their very midst caused a good deal of fluttering in the various dove-cotes, and I must have appeared to them in the light of a scarecrow, if any of them had ever seen me. I was dressed in a pair of filthy white ducks turned up to the knee, a priceless Turnbull and Asser shirt, sun-bleached of all its original colour, a dirty red silk handkerchief round my neck, not so much for effect as for protection against the heat, and a huge grass hat to complete. I had by this time quite a thick beard and my arms, for colour, would have compared favourably with any of theirs. In one hand I carried a small leather despatch case, and had I only pos-

sessed an eye-glass and a swagger cane to complete the effect, I could have brought the house down in any music hall.

When they saw I was making for the pub, the men all round got up, and one, a negro, who looked slightly superior to the rest, came forward. I asked him if he were Henrique, telling him who had favoured me with his name on the mainland. We shook hands cordially, and one by one the leading men came forward and followed suit. They patted me on the back in a friendly way, although an air of suppressed suspicion prevailed and much whispering was going on all the time. My host, Henrique, looked a thorough-faced rascal, but he had a merry laugh which soon made me feel a trifle less uncomfortable and when I told him where I had come from, and that my object was to look for a likely site to put up a lighthouse, he had sufficient intelligence to know I must be something superior to an ordinary fisherman, and addressed me then and there as "Senhor Doutor" (Mr. Doctor). This title stuck to me while I was on the island, all Brazilian professional men, engineers, lawyers or surgeons being styled doctors.

Henrique went down to the beach for my two suit cases, the steamer labels on which soon caused such excitement as threatened to eclipse my own popularity. I arranged with him to have the use of one of the newer grass-covered huts, and he was evidently relieved at the opportunity for taking me away from his own hut and showing me my new quarters—if he had had a chained lion inside his own hut he could not have shown more concern at my attempts to enter it. He accompanied me with half the male population to a newly erected hut standing a bit off the beaten track, and removed the grass-covered hurdle which constituted the dor. My spirits sank even lower when we stepped inside, for the stench was something too terrible

and the whole place was filthy beyond words. As it was an unoccupied hut, Henrique had used it for storing dried prawns, which were piled up in large quantities at the far end. The few minutes I was inside almost made me faint, but at my request he promised to remove the stinking crustaceans, and set some dozen naked boys to do the job immediately. My two bags, a hammock and a deck chair, which I had brought with me, were put inside, and I noticed with uneasiness that there were four other hammocks slung to the centre pole from the four main roof supports and hanging a foot off the ground. He cheered me up by asking if I would like a bath, so taking a towel and sponge bag, I accompanied him through his own quarters to an outhouse built in the same style. To my amazement I noticed in passing through the front part of his hut, which was the grog shop, that he had shelves up all round on which were arranged many bottles of beer, brandy, Perrier, ginger-beer, and mixed sweets in bottles; also straw hats, various tins of preserved fruits and a quantity of red and green electric light bulbs. He hustled me through quickly, but to this day I am prepared to swear that what I saw was not fancy, as he tried to make out afterwards, for although I was only absent half an hour over my ablutions, when I returned to his shop there was not a vestige of any of these things to be seen, and in their place a quantity of fishing tackle, nets, empty earthenware jars and various odds and ends had been substituted. Whilst having my so-called bath, which consisted of a small lard-sized tin of blackish looking water, I had consoled myself with the prospect of unlimited beer, so that you can picture my dismay when, on returning to his shop and asking him for a bottle, he laughed at me and said, "Mr. Doctor! Beer? We have no beer in these parts." I was quick enough to see at once what

had happened, but it was galling to think he had all that stuff and was not going to let me have any of it. I had heard on the mainland that the island had been used by the Germans on various occasions to re-victual the *Karlsruhe* from the stores of the British ships she captured, and I found out later that besides the *Karlsruhe*, which appears to have been there several times, the *Vandyke*, a large 10,000-ton Lamport & Holt liner, had been in there, followed later by the colliers, *Rio Negro* and *Patagonia*. The *Farne*, a British ship manned by a German prize crew, had also visited the island. The stores which I had seen in Henrique's hut probably came from the *Vandyke*, as the appearance of such a large ship gave them much to talk about, and I heard later that many "presents" had come out of her. Henrique was undoubtedly suspicious that my visit was connected with his stores, and did the obviously best thing to do under the circumstances—hid everything away and swore that he had nothing. I really could have wept with rage, as I badly wanted something more substantial than the mango and dried prawn diet on which I had existed for over a fortnight. At the same time I could not help admiring the calm way in which he lied, although his acting was somewhat spoilt by a small boy occasionally creeping past us as we sat at the entrance to his hut, and returning to ask where the "doces" (sweets) were. A healthy smack with the open hand was Henrique's way of dealing with awkward questions, and our conversation would continue as though there had been no interruption.

All the time he was with me, Henrique had a funny little naked black girl in his arms, who every now and again would set up an ear-piercing shriek. If this was continued for any length of time, he would deal with her

in the same fashion—turn the child over on her little black tummy and administer a resounding smack, which nearly always had the desired effect of making her shut up.

All this time a meal was being prepared, and presently it made its appearance. I got up from the hard earth on which I had been sitting, expecting to be introduced to the rather portly black lady who was obviously Henrique's better half, but he merely told her to take the meal away again and bring a box to act as a table. She re-appeared later with an old whisky box, over which she spread my towel which I had already used for my bath. The crowd by this time had retired, to feed I presumed, so Henrique asked me to look after the brat whilst he went inside his hut, and deposited her on the sand beside me. The prolonged absence of both parents caused her to redouble her previous efforts and she made such a row that I thought I would try my hand on the magic stop. I turned her over with my feet and gave her one, into which I put a bit intended for her father for his obstinacy in refusing to let me have the beer. But this time it had no effect whatever, and she yelled more lustily than ever. The mother at last arrived with the tins of food in each hand, but she didn't take the slightest notice of either of us, and the yelling did not cease, until Henrique appeared with a half-eaten mango, which the kid promptly started to suck, making an awful mess of its face and chest.

Henrique stood on no ceremony, and after helping himself with his fingers to a fair-sized fish in one of the tins, he passed it over to me. I was a bit annoyed when he started pouring "farinha" (ground mandioco maize) into the gravy, before I had had my second whack at the fish, and giving it to the child in balls, so I passed that course and went for the chicken, which was quite tasty,

although a bit overdone, and it took me two or three dips before I could find a bone with anything on.

As soon as the meal was put on the table, eight enormous pigs turned up and scrambled all around us for the bits we dropped—altogether it was not an enjoyable repast, but I was so hungry I could have cheerfully gone through it again. More trouble ensued when Henrique removed the débris and left the child with me, as she put down her mango stone for a minute while she investigated a fish bone and a large pig walked off with it.

It was now dark, and kerosene flares had been lit inside Henrique's hut. He appeared and asked me to come in, and as the crowd had again returned and started their usual occupation of spitting, I was glad to avail myself of his invitation. His hut was about five yards by four, divided off at the far end by a sort of counter, over which he dispensed the national strong "cacasha," giving a small cup full in exchange for a handful of dried prawns, which constituted the local currency. He had quite a tidy pile by 9 p.m., when the after-dinner drinking appeared to stop, and consequently the atmosphere became more and more pronounced. Apparently every one cured his own prawns, but it was left to Henrique to take them over about once a month to the mainland for sale. He had quite "cornered" the prawn market in Sao Joao by reason of his business; as he merely exchanged strong drinks or sail cloth for their equivalent in prawns, this required no system of double entry ledger books, and left him free to smoke and spit in front of his shop and cuddle his offspring, of which he had any number. He produced some excellent green cocoanuts for me, the milk of which makes a most refreshing drink, and I drank up any amount of these during my stay of 14 days on the island.

At last I began to get anxious about my sleeping arrangements, so suggested to Henrique that if he would give me a flare, I would paddle down to my hut. My hut!—imagine my disgust at arriving with Henrique and finding the place, with three other men turned in, and shrieking for aid with its terrible attendant stench of dried prawns. I told him at once that I would not sleep there with three other men. I wanted a hut all to myself and a clean one; I would pay him and pay him well. He explained that at great personal inconvenience these men had come to sleep in my hut to show me their appreciation of my selecting their island for my stay, and that even he was going to do me the honour of sharing the other hammock!

Protests were unavailing, and after helping me to sling my hammock, which hung about a foot from his, he turned in and watched with evident astonishment my change into pyjamas. The others were now fully awake and most personal remarks were passed about the whiteness of my skin.

Before getting into my hammock, I pushed the covering away from the door, to try and get a little air into the place, but there were loud protests at once, as I was informed that evil spirits abounded in the island and unless every place was hermetically closed down at night, they would come in and cast a spell on one!

Of the horrors of the night, it is difficult to write. No sooner had I lain down—not to sleep, for I had no intention of attempting to do so with the four natives around me—than they started a regular systematic course of throat-clearing of the most disgusting character. Each appeared to be trying to outdo his neighbour, and the result baffles description. I found out afterwards that it was not done for my special benefit, but was a regular

nightly performance, and they appeared to be able to do so even in their sleep, for the noise went on until 3 a.m., when my friends got up and went off prawn fishing. After this I slept until Henrique woke me, with a cup of black coffee in his hands."

The above is fairly illustrative of Pullen's life for the next 14 days. He entered fully into the life of the islanders, going on their fishing excursions and generally interesting himself in the natives and their ways. So well did he impress them that their suspicions were quickly allayed, and he learnt from these red men all that he wished to know. They told him of the ships that had been anchored off there, and of their visits to them, and he found out that an English cruiser came here once and narrowly missed recapturing the British steamer *Farne*, then in charge of a German prize crew, who lay hidden in one of the creeks close by.

It has already been stated that he lived for a fortnight with the islanders, but although Henrique's mistrust had been broken down, the hiding-place of the longed-for beer was never revealed. Henrique was a slimy brute to give him his full due. Pullen rendered him certain services in fitting him and his family out with clothing. He had brought along sundry articles suitable for presents; included among these was a Burberry waterproof, which prize naturally fell to Henrique himself. Pullen described how, when it rained, in Sao Joao settlement, the wily negro would stand arrayed in the Burberry in the middle of the settlement square, to be admired, envied and worshipped by his dusky customers. Can you picture him? If Messrs. Burberry want to establish a branch at Sao Joao, Pullen assures me that the Sao Joao-ites are prepared to barter plenty of smelly

prawns, and doubtless there are many, whose ideas of the equality of man will give the islanders a chance to put up their prawns for sale in the Haymarket.

In order to get clear of the islands with the information required, Pullen bartered with Henrique for the hire of a boat. One was finally obtained from an adjacent islet. The small fishing craft, 16 feet in length, was anchored off the settlement and Pullen surveyed it. This was a more attractive craft than the one he had come over with. It was sheltered in part from the sun by means of a small well-deck. Henrique assured Pullen that with his assistance, the journey to Braganca could be made in a couple of days, and once there he knew he would find a railway and communications available.

On his way to the beach Pullen's heart leapt with joy at the idea of leaving his unsavoury friends, the Henrique family, but picture his disappointment when he arrived alongside the boat to find the whole family on board; all the pleasure promised by the shelter of the well-deck quickly vanished when he climbed on board to find himself once more forced to live cheek by jowl with these unutterably dirty people. In the tiny cockle-shell were no less than seven children, Mrs. Henrique, her companion (another fat negress), Henrique, an assistant negro, and the lieutenant himself. In their bargain for the Burberry coat no mention had been made of the Henrique family. Henrique had merely agreed to provide a boat with two men to work it, this including himself. Pullen was furious, but the Henrique family were not to be done out of their joy-ride, and after all, two days was not an interminable epoch. The journey actually took seven days, the unnecessary increase in time being occasioned by the sea-sickness which overcame the Henrique family;

and the fat Madame Henrique having more say than anyone in the boat, she prevailed upon her lawful spouse to make the journey to Braganca by means of the inland waterways, once the mainland was reached. Pullen angrily protested, but the angrier he got the more the family crowded round him, and literally overpowered him by their close-packed bodies; he eventually gave way, although he much wanted the boat to skirt along the coast line, in order that he might be given the opportunity to get further information. However, Henrique's boat was the only transport available, and he took it, glad enough to get clear.

This journey was not without interest, for the fishing craft, once they had reached the mainland, had to be propelled through sluggish, winding streams, which in places were roofed over with vegetation so thick that the boat's mast often caught up in it and had to be cleared with a hatchet.

The opportunity of a cruise like this occurs but once in a lifetime, and although Pullen's pleasure was marred by the company he kept, he had many chances of seeing things which deep-sea sailors never will. Telling me his story during the long, dark night watches on the *Active's* bridge, he pictured his extraordinary journey; his description of the myriads of light heliotrope orchids with their scarlet centres, made one long to be an explorer once again, to go with him where he had been to to see what he had seen. It all seemed so extraordinary, this travelling and experience, and that we in this great war, all working in our water-tight compartments, our horizon limited, our ideas narrowed by the great and necessary secrecy, were denied access to one another's widely differing experiences unless a coincidence such as that

which threw Pullen and myself together, gave us the opportunity to exchange reminiscences.

I am afraid I laughed without restraint when Pullen told me about his life during those awful seven days. To begin with, Madame Henrique had arrayed her children in their best when she marched them to their ship, a distance of no more than 50 yards, for the benefit of those who had come to bid her farewell. The little chocolate coloured children were in simple calico print dresses of varying hues and shades. They hated it, having run naked all their lives. Madame herself wore high-heeled shoes on which she clumsily pivoted her bulky mass as she started across the sands; unfortunately, however, the strain was too great for her, and after the shoes were filled with the fine yellow shingle stuff, she was forced to end by carrying the light brown calf-skins in her hand. No sooner on board than they put away their party suits, and before the last good-byes were said, most of the party were naked.

Pullen's description of the incidents during the voyage I cannot give in full, but many things would appeal to those who have never made extended boat journeys, and even to some who have. The cooking and feeding were so disgusting that Pullen kept to a diet of mangoes, of which, fortunately, there was ample supply. It should be remembered that the cooking was done in tins, which served a variety of purpose; they were never properly cleaned, they smelt of bad fish, and when the meals were served in them, each dirty little negro child grabbed something from the pot. When Pullen's turn came to grab his share he usually emptied what he got quietly over the side. He could hardly offend these people, for they really did mean well, and however great

his distaste for the Henrique family, they lacked not generosity. And, as Pullen himself confessed, Henrique's smile made up for many of his shortcomings. They could after all, do no more than offer him the best they had to give, invariably dried prawns or black beans.

Their daily life consisted of paddling the boat through the labyrinth of rivulets at a rate of some three miles an hour; they worked the boat according to the tides, both by night and day. As may be imagined, in their congested floating home quarrels were of daily occurrence, one might almost say hourly. Henrique and his wife being the closest relations, led easily in this. Madame was a pessimist. Up till now her life had been a fairly happy one, because she had not had the opportunity of doing the grand tour; her domestic duties had kept her employed, and before she honoured Pullen with her presence on their yachting trip, she had never had leisure enough to cause any serious trouble. But here, afloat, with nothing to do, these quarrels were inevitable. Pullen himself was exempt; the party certainly never lost their respect for him, and even the children, when they yelled, were silenced by a look from him.

At night comparative peace reigned, the mother, companion and children retired to the shelter of the well-deck, exhausted by the labours and quarrels of the day. Pullen stretched out on the sail, right aft, Henrique lay on the side, and the native fisherman, whose boat it really was, crouched in the bows.

It was during the moonless period, and the nights were dark and generally still. The stillness was occasionally broken by the beautiful bird-calls, and towards the approach of dawn the chattering of monkeys made itself

heard. But these animal sounds were all music that merely rocked the human cargo to sleep.

On the eighth morning out, Pullen arrived at Braganca where he bade farewell to the family of Henrique. All the discomforts of this odious journey were quickly forgotten, the little vices, nasty habits and attendant beastliness of this hardly picturesque family have faded by now from Pullen's memory, and if you meet him lunching at the Carlton and mention the name Henrique, he will say, "Here's luck to the old boy with his fat negro wife. He had a white man's heart."

I do not propose to prolong the adventures of Lieut. Pullen, although many things that he has told me, I have not here set down; but what has been told in this chapter sufficiently illustrates an altogether unheard of and unadvertised sea patrol. It cannot fail to interest the reader of this simple sailor volume. We who go down to the sea in different styles of craft are but simple sailor folk, out to win, to do our best, and entirely devoid of rhetoric, but we all have one thing in common, and that is the national heritage of sea instinct that has made our little island nation what it is. Pullen, of whom I have written, had the heart of a sailor, the mind of a king and the physique of a bank clerk. He gave the combination of these three things to the service of the Allies, and when that dirty little Brazilian sailing boat ejected him at Braganca, as the whale ejected Jonah, Pullen, with all his great patriotic heart, was physically broken down. He made his way to the railway station and after hours, mostly spent in sleep, he arrived at Paga. Thence he made his way to the British Consulate and told them what he knew. There are many things that Pullen observed that have not been indicated in this little volume.

On arriving at the Consulate, the Brazilian porter rejected him as one unfit to gain admittance, but after some badinage in English and Portuguese Pullen obtained an audience with the British Consul himself. By this time Pullen was almost odious to look upon. His matted locks fell greasily over his ears, his beard untrimmed gave him the appearance of the wild man from Borneo, and his clothing reeked. The consul treated Pullen with curiosity, mixed with a certain amount of suspicion. He obviously mistook him for a distressed seaman of a very low calibre. After a short conversation, however, his suspicions were dispelled, and when Pullen, who is nothing if not a humourist, had had a little sport at the Consul's expense, he identified himself as one C. H. Pullen, whose whereabouts was unknown. The consul informed him that many and anxious enquiries had come through from the British Legation at Rio; and after Pullen had made known some of his experience to Mr. Michel, the British Consul in question, that gentleman apologised for not being able to invite him to dinner, as he was expecting ladies that night. Mr. Michell was obviously distressed at not being able to extend his hospitality to Pullen on account of his dreadful appearance, but Pullen laughingly re-assured him, and suggested that he should make his appearance later on, when he had bathed, shaved and changed. A very different young gentleman confronted the consul later, and the consul recalls with some amusement that he did not know his guest when Pullen arrived at 7 p.m.

Those of us who have done any service as explorers, tramps, or guests of an Henrique family, can well appreciate the extraordinary sensation of putting on a stiff collar once again—the agony of constantly twisting

one's neck, putting one's finger down, smoothing, straightening and squirming. All these things are good to experience.

I regret to say that the extraordinary adventures of Pullen left him in very bad health, and the return to civilisation and civilised food, which came about so suddenly, upset him so much that he collapsed. He was ill for many days, but good simple food and rest soon pulled him through and he arrived in England two months later, none the worse for his experiences.

Reverting now to the beginning of this chapter—I found him, I stole him and I took him to Lisbon. Since it was Armistice time and our widely differing sea patrols were ended, Pullen and I cruised round in the beautiful Portuguese city, and having seen as much as we could, we moved afield and out into the lovely country highways. I learnt from him the details of his naval service that he had from modesty omitted whilst on board the *Active*, perhaps the bare-footed Josés, ambling alongside their carroces on the hard white Portuguese roads, awakened memories of the Brazilian coasts patrols and made Pullen tell me his story.

I hesitated to include this chapter because, realising as every Allied subject must what tremendous assistance has been given to the Allied cause by the great Brazilian Republic, I fear that Englishmen may think Pullen's story a reflection on Brazil. This of course is far from my intention; Pullen, having received great hospitality at Brazilian hands, has learnt to know Brazil and to appreciate affectionately the friendship of this great country.

Pullen's adventures more properly lay with the negro element who, although Brazilian subjects, in no way represent the true Brazilian type to whom we owe so much.

CHAPTER XVIII

A PORTUGUESE SEA PATROL

THE foregoing chapter may well be supplemented by an account of what a young Portuguese midshipman went through towards the end of the war. I learnt about this when the *Active* visited Lisbon, and the account was given to me by Admiral Da Costa Ferreira, who was at the time First Sea Lord in the Portuguese Admiralty.

On the 12th October, 1918, the trawler mine-sweeper, *Augusto de Casticho*, commanded by Lieut. Carvetho Arango, left Funchal for Ponta Delgada as escort to the passenger steamer, *S. Miguel*. At daybreak, two days later, an enemy submarine was sighted, and its identity was declared by its opening fire on the passenger ship. On board the mine-sweeper, the crew immediately went to action stations, while the submarine steaming rapidly on the surface, took up its position between the steamer and the mine-sweeper and commenced firing simultaneously against these two small vessels. It was very quickly recognized that the submarine was superior both in guns and speed to the mine-sweeper. Nevertheless, Lieut. Carvetho Arango at once made for the submarine at full speed, and the submarine retired out of range, firing as she went and wasting a quantity of ammunition. The *S. Miguel* turned and made away at full speed, and the little Portuguese trawler kept between

her and the submarine, putting up a noble fight with her two small guns. She was, however, hopelessly out-matched. After half-an-hour's engagement, an enemy shell struck the *Augusto de Casticho*, mortally wounding a cadet named Eloy de Freitas and wounding Midshipman Arenando Ferraz, the second in command, besides a gunner and some seamen. However, the *Augusto de Casticho* had got the submarine into the range of her own guns and the shells commencing to fall round the U boat, she steamed once more away. In the Portuguese trawler, after forty minutes' of fighting, the ammunition was practically all expended and the deck was crowded with wounded and dying. However, the *S. Miguel* had by this time made good her escape and this being so, the *Augusto de Casticho* was turned away, since it was quite impossible for her to gain any success against the enemy. The stern gun of the mine-sweeper, under Midshipman Ferraz, continued firing, but the submarine easily kept out of range and continued shooting from a distant of 3,000 metres. It was now reported to the mine-sweeper's commander that the ammunition had almost run out. He answered curtly, "We can die fighting as Portuguese," then turning with his bow to the enemy, the commander took personal charge of the firing, at the same time manœuvring his vessel back to the attack. The submarine once again retired, but the ammunition of the little Portuguese was now almost expended, although the last few rounds were carefully husbanded. After being in action two hours, Lieut. Carvetho Aranjó exclaimed with supreme satisfaction "The steamer is safe, we have done some good." This was indeed the case, for the *S. Miguel* was over 20 miles away. The mine-sweeper's bow gun was the larger of

her two pieces, and when no ammunition remained for it, the ship was turned to bring her stern gun to bear. The second officer, Midshipman Ferraz, who had received fresh wounds in the back and arm, managed the gun himself, firing about 20 shots, and then when every round had been exhausted, the lifeboat was lowered, for the *Augusto de Casticho* was sinking. To save further loss of life, the commander hoisted a white flag under the national colours. The second boat was then lowered but, being full of holes, it sank. There was still a small boat in the davits, which was not ready for launching and there were not sufficient men to clear it. The officers and a wounded seamen set to work to clear it away.

The enemy continued firing in spite of the white flag, which was plainly visible. Two 4.1-inch shells burst on board, injuring the boat and wounding the two officers, and another shell fell close to the lifeboat which, acting under the orders of Lieut Aranjo, had pulled some distance away. A shell fragment mortally wounded Aranjo in the chest and with one foot shattered the gallant Portuguese officer fell with his head against the winch. Midshipman Ferraz, although badly wounded, went to the assistance of his commander, only to find that he was dead. The midshipman, who was scarcely twenty, collected the few wounded seamen together and the little party threw themselves into the sea, there being no other course open to them since the trawler was on fire and settling down. Before plunging into the sea Midshipman Ferraz went to the captain's cabin to fetch the confidential books and destroy them, and then went overboard, swimming with one arm and one leg, to a life buoy, which had previously been thrown over.

The *Augusto de Casticho's* life boat was too crowded to embark the poor fellows swimming in the water, in fact it was almost sinking, and Ferraz bravely held on to the buoy for an hour and a half rather than jeopardise the chances of safety for those in the boat. The submarine now approaching, ordered the lifeboat alongside. When the boat had approached the submarine, orders were given to the Portuguese to proceed and they were prevented from helping the men swimming in the water.

The submarine then came close to the life buoy, to which several men were now clinging and threw a rope to them. The Portuguese were then hauled on to the deck of the submarine, when the officers and crew received them at the point of their revolvers and a cinematograph operator took a film of the scene. One of the submarine officers opened a conversation in French with Midshipman Ferraz, asking him if the commander of the *Augusto de Casticho* were dead. Receiving an affirmative reply, he expressed his regret somewhat curtly and complimented the survivors on the way in which they had fought their ship. He said that his commander never expected the Portuguese to defend themselves with so much courage, realising what the odds were.

Ferraz requested that his seamen should have their wounds dressed, and the officer, after calling the surgeon, turned to him and said, "Why did you join the British?"

The mine-sweeper remained afloat for some time with her decks awash, and after the Portuguese had been attended to and an injection of morphia given to Ferraz, he was allowed to send four seamen on board the

Augusto de Casticho in the submarine dinghy. They managed to launch the mine-sweeper's remaining boat and stopped up the holes in it with a coat. Fortunately, they had a barrel with 14 litres of water and a box of biscuits in this boat. A Portuguese seaman wished to fetch a compass, but a German who had boarded the mine-sweeper with the Portuguese sailors prevented him, kicking him in the chest. The boat was what we should call a dinghy, and had two oars and no sails, but Ferraz managed to secure a couple of oars in addition, while the attention of the German was for the moment distracted.

The midshipman asked the submarine commander to tow him closer to the land. This request was coldly refused with the stereotyped phrase, "*C'est la Guerre*"; and the Germans cast the boat off.

There were twelve survivors in this small boat when they set out on their journey to the nearest land. The Germans blew up the mine-sweeper shortly after, and three hours later the U boat again closed them, passing within a hundred yards of the Portuguese and gloating over them.

For six days and six nights the survivors of the *Augusto de Casticho* pulled towards the land, and their sufferings were indescribable. Thanks to the courage of the midshipman, who continually cheered them up, the Portuguese bravely persisted in their efforts to save themselves, but it was a desolate and dismal business, with nothing but sky and sea for the men to look at. They searched the horizon continually for smoke or some sign of a passing ship, unfortunately without success.

On the second day of this miserable voyage they

experienced a rough sea, which re-opened the breach in the boat, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they managed to stop it afresh. They suffered dreadfully from hunger and thirst, but it was impossible to masticate the biscuit, which was soaked in sea water soon after the submarine left them.

On the 19th October, at about 11 in the forenoon one of the seamen, who was rowing, standing up after the Portuguese fashion, suddenly cried out, "Land." It appeared to be a great distance off, but it was land all the same, and twenty-four hours later the little boat reached it.

Men who have been adrift at sea will understand the joy of survivors when they saw the shore; they rowed frantically, but were too weak to get up much speed.

However, about noon on the 20th, they arrived at Ponta Os Arnel, where they were kindly received and their wounds dressed. The midshipman was awarded the Portuguese Order of the Tower and Sword for his services and he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

While the *Active* was in Lisbon we wished to show some appreciation of this gallant Portuguese officer and his brave companions, who certainly had added a proud page to Portuguese naval history. I was in rather a unique position in this respect, for Portugal is in the front rank as a country of geographical discovery, and being a bit of an explorer myself, I was able to organize a lecture on "Captain Scott's Last Expedition," which I gave in the beautiful building of the Geographical Society at Lisbon. The President of the Society, himself a sailor, in his opening address asked those present at the lecture

to subscribe to the fund which had been opened for the *Augusto de Casticho* dependants. A very considerable sum was forthcoming, and this was handed over to the Portuguese Admiralty in the name of H.M.S. *Active*.
Viva Portugal!

CHAPTER XIX

BELGIUM, 1919

THOSE who have fought on the side of the Allies on the Western Front, cannot possibly fail to appreciate the difference between the Belgium of late 1914 and the Belgium of today.

Before the war, visitors to this land were always struck by the energy of the people. The prevailing feature was cleanliness in the towns, industry throughout the entire country, and a feeling of peaceful contentment in the rural districts.

In the summer, especially, Belgium is beautiful, although devoid, in the Flanders part, of the hills to which we in Great Britain are accustomed. There is a green loveliness and peacefulness which attracts one strongly to Flanders. Now that the war is over and the people have come back, many will have for some time a feeling of unrest, for the great pleasure of re-visiting their homes has been sadly marred by the trademark of the German race. The huge sand dunes which build a rampart right along the Belgian coast have been entirely disfigured by innumerable German batteries. They are to be found everywhere so closely placed that the guns are only separated by a matter of a hundred yards or so. The whole coast defence has been reinforced by batteries of 15-inch and other heavy guns immediately in the rear of the sand dunes themselves.

The Germans took advantage of the light electric railway behind the dunes to feed their batteries and to complete the very excellent inter-battery communication. The existence of this railway was indeed a very fortunate circumstance for the Boches entrenched in Flanders. I do not know what the expert opinion on the subject of coast bombardments is, but what the Germans thought is very evident. One only has to walk a few miles along the dunes at any part to appreciate how much our enemy feared and respected the British Navy.

In 1914-15 and perhaps 1916 there was a good deal of real patriotism obtaining in the German Marine Korps certainly. As the war progressed there are signs that the patriotism of the Marine Korps waned, for in odd spots one finds caricatures of the Kaiser and little Willy obviously made by the Germans themselves; for it is hardly to be expected that Belgians would take the trouble to march miles along the dunes with pots of paint and German grammars and dictionaries in order to camouflage and make propaganda that practically nobody would ever come across. These things bear signs of having been executed in the last two years of the war.

However, one is gladdened now-a-days on passing by these self-same dunes to notice how industriously Belgian workmen are pulling down these memorials to the Germany of the past. They are busily engaged in removing all traces of these disfiguring things, though probably a certain number will be left as objects of attraction and interest. If visitors find them too hideous for their holiday enjoyment, they can always turn their backs on them and gaze over the green fields of Belgium towards the beautiful spire of Bruges Cathe-

dral, which stands out as a land-mark for the whole coast from Ostend to Knocke.

Flanders has been magnificently described by the Belgian poet, Verhaeren. This man, whose pen is so poetically descriptive, was unfortunately run over and killed by a locomotive at Rouen during the war. In order to pay him a last respect, the Belgians buried him with military honours at Adinkerke, one of those typical Flanders villages which he so splendidly portrays. The exquisite green of the Flanders plains baffles description by an ordinary sailor, but nevertheless, those who come to Belgium will see it for themselves, and by reading Verhaeren's poems, without even visiting Belgium, they can conjure up in their imaginations the country's beauty as something superb.

The Germans made themselves pretty comfortable on the Belgian coast, and certainly their defensive engineering works are unparalleled. The lock gates at Zeebrugge are well protected; when the caissons are opened they run back under a concrete shelter with a covering of reinforced concrete five feet thick to protect them from air-raids and bombardments.

To minister to the comfort of the German Marine Korps in Flanders, they constructed amongst the dunes underground villas with tiled walls and floors, electric lighting, central heating and every modern household convenience. In one of them was a beautiful fountain, which played coolly during the summer months. The Huns rather spoiled the beauty of this aquatic ornament by mounting washed-up British mines on pedestals alongside of it. These they disfigured with the usual "*Got mitt Uns*" type of inscription. The villas were protected by the customary five feet of reinforced con-

crete, and they were furnished luxuriously with stolen furniture accumulated in the neighbourhood, special attention naturally being given to the contents of the better class houses, which were denuded of pictures, curtains, carpets—and, in short, of everything that was costly and beautiful.

These underground officers' quarters were wrecked by the Germans themselves when they departed from the coast, and the furniture which could not be carried off was hacked and hewed to pieces.

The telephone installation of the coast defence received a tremendous amount of attention. The Germans were perfectly extraordinary in the use they made of the telephone, one finds evidence of this in all the occupied parts of Belgium.

Although nobody would wish to say a good thing for the armies of occupation, one is bound to admit that same parts of Belgium suffered but trifling inconveniences compared to others which were literally razed to the ground, as Termonde was. But from Nieuport to Ypres, all along the banks of the Yser, and as far as the French border one literally cannot see a house standing. On the other hand take Ostend; this town, although denuded of such things as iron balconies, brass door-knobs and most other metal objects, has not suffered to any large extent, except from looting. Material damage in Ostend has been slight, but the looting and requisitioning have been so systematically carried out that few people have any household gods in their possession. As an example, from one hotel fifty silver-plated coffee filters were taken off by German officers; and the late owner, whom I know, saw them being used by the officers at their own mess in the German Kommandantur

and other places and in the German casinos. The Palace Hotel, the largest in Ostend and originally a magnificent building, contained the well-known winter garden which many English people had visited prior to the war. This was commandeered by the Huns; the winter garden was used as a stable, and a huge stationary engine was installed, boilers put in, and so forth, until the place was quite beyond recognition. Needless to say it was stripped of every article of furniture, including all the baths, wash-hand basins, etc., which were carried off to the coast defence dug-outs and gun battery positions, the overflow going to Germany. The Ostendais state that Prince Adalbert was in special charge of the "salvage" corps, and presumably was responsible for this wholesale spoliation.

At the north-east end of the Belgian coast very little damage has been done, and a certain amount of constructive work has been carried out, for example, the old Spanish fortifications near the Dutch border have been built up with a view to arresting any attack which might have been attempted through Dutch territory.

Bruges, which, as everyone knows is one of the most beautiful old-world cities, has been very carefully handled by the Boche, although he has left dirty marks enough. Probably the reason that Bruges got off lightly was on account of its being the headquarters of the marine korps and naturally Von Schroeder and his kamarades kept it as snug as possible for their own benefit. Admiral von Schroeder was the Governor of Flanders and the Naval Commander-in-Chief. His daughter accompanied him to Bruges, and it is safe to say that she was the most hated woman in the town. Fraulein von Schroeder disguised herself as a lady under

the red cross uniform, but in reality she was the prime mover in the officers' casinos, in which she was frequently to be seen with a big flaxen-haired German woman, according to the statements of many of those who were forced to remain in Bruges throughout the war. The mere mention of Fraulein von Schroeder's name causes people to spit and make hideous faces.

Von Schroeder had for his headquarters the Palais du Gouvernement in the Grand Place. The Admiral himself slept in the next room to his office, and the beautiful rooms of the Palais were sectioned off into offices and orderly rooms.

I found written by a Belgian girl on the photograph of von Schroeder, the following lines:—

“ In einem Bruggen Unterstand
Verteidigte
Herr Admiral Schroeder
Sein Kultiviertes Vaterland.”

which being interpreted means:—

“ In a shelter in Bruges, Admiral von Schroeder defended his Kultured Fatherland.”

Much of the beautiful interior of the Palais du Gouvernement has been spoilt by the Germans, but its exterior hardly suffered; and I am glad to say that the town hall and belfry, which date from 1619, are left intact. The beautiful leather chair seats, with arms of the ancient city, have been rudely cut away and stolen, and the masonry of the interior has been most inconsiderately knocked about to make way for telephone cables and electric circuits, in an absolutely careless fashion.

Bruges is known as the old Venice of the Continent,

being entirely surrounded by water, with many intersecting canals. To be best appreciated the town should be seen on a hazy autumn day, when it has a mysterious charm which has been fully described by Rodenbach in his famous "Bruges, la Morte."

Bruges docks, which are connected with Zeebrugge by a magnificent canal, lent themselves pre-eminently for the docking of submarines and for resting the crews after the very strenuous sea work which they were called upon to perform while the Germans pursued their policy of ruthless submarine warfare. And here the German naval headquarters staff showed their cleverness, for the sleepy, beautiful old city breathes repose and tranquillity. Contrast this glorious resting-place with Dover Harbour! After seeing where the Germans had their stand-offs, one thinks of some of the dreadful nights we spent in Dover. It amounts to this, that while we had a most anxious time, being exposed to the winter gales in our Dover base, the Germans, when they came into harbour, were as snug and safe as we should have been if we had taken our ships bodily and placed them in Tunbridge Wells.

Here at Bruges Docks we found the famous submarine shelters, which are built like an ancient Roman temple of columnar structure, covered in this case with an eight-foot reinforced concrete roof, which should be absolutely bomb-proof. The submarine shelter is divided into eight deep bays, capable of taking several submarines in each. This building is constructed on piles and the depth of water in the shelter is not under 30 feet. It was still being enlarged when it fell into the hands of the Belgians. The building is fitted with living quarters for the crews of the submarines.

Before evacuating Bruges Docks, the enemy sunk six floating docks, in one of which was a submarine and in another a large modern destroyer. The enemy used so much explosive in destroying the submarine that they blew half of it out of and over the dock, when it bedded itself in the bank. A score of ships have been sunk by the Germans in the docks and the Zeebrugge-Bruges canal. The port clearance and salvage which is going on at the time of the Peace deliberations, will probably take longer than the signing of the Peace Treaty itself.

I am purposely refraining from describing Zeebrugge and the bottling up of this port and Ostend. I regret that I took no part in these heroic operations, but they have been well described elsewhere and a special book on the subject has been written and published by Professor Sandford Terry.

In spite of the unsettled feelings of those Belgians who have come back to wrecked and ruined homes, the country folk who were here during the German occupation, have not had their land despoiled, for happily nature is more generous and much stronger than the Hun. Everything this summer is green and fertile once more, field after field of bowing wheat can be seen from the Belgian highways, vegetation is luxurious, and as an agricultural country, Belgium will quickly be re-developed into its excellent pre-war state by the individual energies of the farmers and peasants.

This same vegetation is quickly hiding all traces of the awful enemy domination which quelled the captured Belgians, although it never conquered their souls or their love for their beautiful country, which is smiling again this summer of 1919.

This spring I had the opportunity of visiting Balgerhoeke, where the Germans made their last stand prior to the signing of the Armistice. The poor little town has been fearfully knocked about, the canal bridge has been blown up and everything done by the enemy to spoil progress and to show, what one can only describe as, brutal spite. Balgerhoeke is a tiny little place about 10 miles north-west of Ghent. Damage due to the shelling by the Allies has left its mark and the place requires a good deal of rebuilding; but the inhabitants complain that unnecessary and wilful damage was done by the Germans, although they knew that they were about to take the preliminary step towards peace.

Belgian workmen have done wonders towards the reconstruction of the railway systems from Ostend to Brussels and Antwerp, which had been frightfully devastated by the retiring enemy. The line had to be entirely relaid, practically every bridge has had to be rebuilt, and at Ghent the railway station was so utterly ruined by explosive charges that in a distance of something over a mile twenty-five bridges were destroyed. The energy of the workpeople has been colossal and great credit is due to the Belgian railway engineers for their organisation and reconstructive planning. Just after the Armistice was signed, it took one 48 hours to travel by rail from Ostend to Brussels; on "Vindictive" Day the journey was done in just over three hours. By the 15th June it is fairly expected that the normal railway and steamboat services will be in force. It is good to see the Belgian labourers working. They realise that the future of Belgium depends on their efforts, and they go on from day to day, working full time, and achieving wonders.

Ghent is a place that has been interesting to visit this spring. Normally the railway ran along an embankment some thirty feet above the level of the town. Owing to the destruction of the bridges, the railway has had to be diverted to run through one of the principal streets and the square. This of course interferes with the Ghent tramway system, but that has had to give way to the more important transport.

One of the saddest features in Belgium's present day commercial state is the gutting of the factories, which has been systematically carried out by the Germans in order to paralyse the trade and production of the country for years to come. At Charleroi over thirty factories have been denuded of the machinery which could be carried off, and those portions which were too difficult to remove have been deliberately broken up.

Although the visitor to Belgium at the present time when all nature is smiling and beautiful, would see very little of these things, the cruel fact remains that Belgium commercially is crippled and will be for some time. Visitors, unfortunately, do not visit factories; they are not interested in them, and there is a danger of some people, full of enthusiasm, running through the principal Belgian cities, being well-treated and well-fed, and then going away feeling that conditions are not so bad after all. I hope this view will not be taken by those who are going to put their money on at the casinos and generally to enjoy themselves in this heroic little land. The natural bravery of the Belgians asserts itself and makes him hide his sorrows and only show a bright face to the visitor, whom he cheerfully greets as one of his trusted allies of the recent dreadful war.

To read the neutral newspapers three months after the Armistice was signed, one would imagine that the Allies were grouped around the bars of an enormous cage, gloating over the discomforts of the German, starving his women and children, freezing him to death and doing everything possible to encourage Bolshevism and anarchy. This conception has undoubtedly been produced by the same lying mob of propaganda agents who were responsible for the circulation of such news as appeared in the *Continental Times*, which was supposed to be written by Americans in Germany, when it was written entirely by Boche agents.

Not sufficient publicity has been given to the Belgian viewpoint of what happened during the Armistice. What have the Germans to say to the following?—

The terms of the Armistice distinctly stated that the Allied Armies should remain in the positions occupied by them on the 11th November, for one week. The Germans in Belgium took advantage of those few days of grace to blow up ammunition dumps, which killed many Belgian non-combatants and caused terrific havoc all over the country. In one particular spot, at Luttre, west of Charleroi, they blew up about 20 trains full of ammunition, which wrecked the district and violated the whole intention of the Armistice terms.

This is my final chapter, and I fear I have expanded somewhat, or shall I say paused by the wayside. The purpose of my book is to give a few peeps behind the scenes and to reveal the glad side of the sea services which I am so proud to be associated with, and at the same time to do what I can to illustrate the heroism of the Belgians. I was deeply touched on "Vindictive" Day when I witnessed with others of our naval service the

tender tribute paid to the memories of those who lost their lives, when the *Vindictive* was so bravely manœuvred into the jaws of the dragon. It would have done all Englishmen good to have taken part in the "Vindictive" Day celebrations. The clean, neat school children, who deposited beautiful floral wreaths on the graves of Commander Godsall and his dead companions, will never forget the ceremony, nor can they forget the simple yet telling words of the Burgomaster. None of us can forget the solemn service in the Cathedral of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, when the priests, clad in their Brussels lace surplices, surmounted with robes of gold, paid homage to the fallen and blessed the memory of their name. Although we Englishmen were for the most part of a different religious faith, we were given the places of honour in the cathedral, and as such guests of honour we felt proud that we were British sailors, standing in the reflected glory of our fallen comrades. The beautiful music of the cathedral went straight to our hearts, and our Belgian brothers in arms conveyed through that medium their sympathetic thoughts and sentiments.

This book about sailors and their friends here in Belgium would not be complete without a respectful reference to one other gallant sailor, whose life was taken from him by the Germans when he was powerless and a prisoner. I am glad that I took the opportunity to visit Captain Fryatt's grave near Bruges. At the time of my visit I was shown to the graveside by friendly Belgians, and as I looked upon the simple black cross that marked the resting-place of this English seaman, I could not help feeling sorry that a movement was afoot to transfer Captain Fryatt's remains from this peacefully

slumbering garden cemetery in the midst of golden-hearted Belgium.

I took a little party of officers and ratings to visit the sailor's grave and afterwards we drove some distance through the countryside. The summer weather was exquisite, and what gladdened me most of all was to see the re-appearance of cattle. As every Belgian knows, the Germans drove away all the live stock from the country when they retreated, but animals have now been replaced, and they are growing fat on the land. The tall ash trees, with their perfect foliage, contrasted happily with the gas-killed trees of the old Western Front. Waving clover, brilliant lucerne, and every shade and hue of green bring peace to the eyes of the Belgian peasant; the spring flowers tempt the laughing children; and great loaded wagons, slowly moving along the straight white, tree-fringed roadways, make one's heart rejoice, for they bring with them the spirit of peace and show one that the country is healing of its wounds.

The scent of some pine trees which industrious Belgian workmen were cutting down and fashioning into pit props, attracted my party off the highway and led me into conversation with a very intelligent woodman, who told me of his war services and something of the removal of ploughs and agricultural*implements by the enemy. But as he sweated at his hewing and chopping there was a gleam of triumph in his eye. We talked a lot of the Germans and I noticed a little Green and red ribbon that he wore; it was the Belgian Croix de Guerre. He saw me looking at it and when I shook hands and bade him good-bye, the gleam of triumph reappeared. "We beat them all right," he said. I simply loved that WE.

Making my way back to headquarters by beautiful twilight and starlight, I thought of Belgium as of a very beautiful girl, who had won through some serious illness—one who should be nourished and nursed and was after all entitled to some petting.

THE END

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